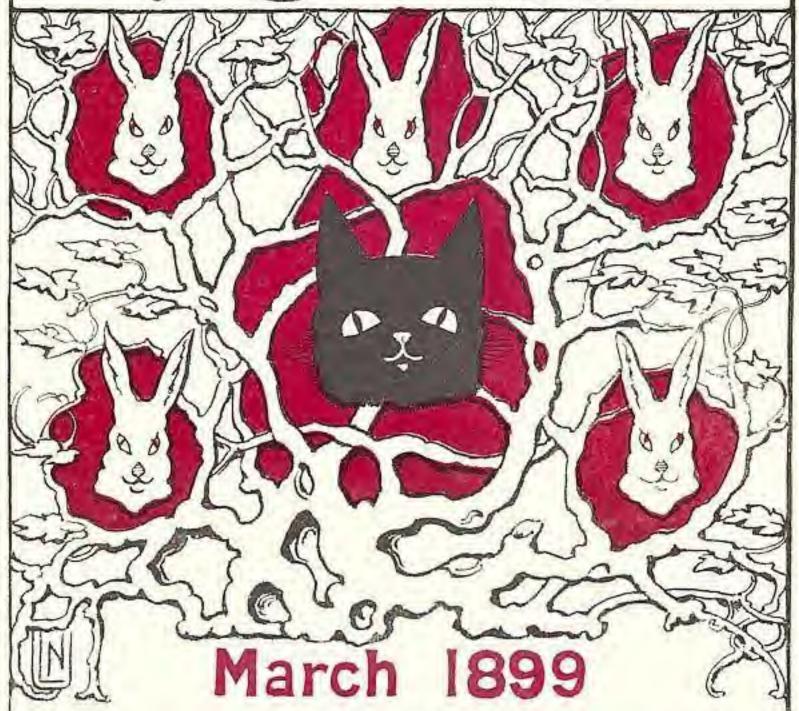
## California Stories

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Underwater House.

Frank Bailey Millard, Larkspur, California.

A Prince of the Jungle. Carroll Carrington, San Francisco, Galifornia.

A Death-Angel in Overalls.

A. H. Hutchinson, San Francisco, California.

The Castro Baby. Mary Austin, Independence, California.

A Sagebrush Cicada.

Miriam Michelson, San Francisco, California,

Cover design, initials and tailpieces by Nelly Littlehale Umbstaetter, Stockton, California. No. 42. Convigue, 180, by The Shortony Publishing Co.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO 144 HIGH ST. BOSTON, MASS.

1851 1899

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Stories from The Black Cat, Collection 2

Bigler's Barometer by Sam Davis - January 1898 In the Power House by Clarence Maiko - February 1898 An Extraordinary Offer (press notices) - February 1808 The Block of Bronze by Herbert W. Crotzer - March 1898 The Cross of Fire by Bert Leston Taylor and Edward Ward -May 1808 The Scent of Jasmine by Livinstone B. Morse - June 1808 The Black Cat \$4000 Prize Story Competition (ad) - July 1898 "Color of Heaven" by Margaret Dodge - January 1899 Underwater House by Frank Bailey Millard - March 1899 The Stolen Skyscraper by Frank Lillie Pollock - April 1899 A Thousand Deaths by Jack London - May 1899 The Horn of Marcus Brunder by Howard Reynolds - June 1899 \$4,200 Cash for Story Writers (ad) - September 1899 The Shadow on the Wall by C. B. Lewis - October 1800 The Woman in Red by Muriel Campbell Dyar - October 1899 30 of the Best Stories Ever Told (ad) - December 1800 Ely's Automatic Housemaid by Elizabeth W. Bellamy -December 1800

Unmasked by Muriel Campbell Dyar - March 1900
The Scientific Circle by C. C. Newkirk - March 1900
On the Turn of a Coin by Cleveland Moffett - April 1900
The Transposition of Stomachs by Charles E. Mixer - April 1900
The Tarantula by Anna McClure Sholl - May 1900
The Black Cat \$5.100 Story Contest: The Successful Competitors
- June 1900

An Unfair Exchange by Ethel Watts Mumford - June 1900
The Dancing Goddess by William Guthrie Kelly - July 1900
The Story of the Black Cat by H. D. Umbstaetter (ad) - July 1900
The Story That Cured His Wife by C. A. Stearns - August 1900
Are You Insured Against the Blues? (ad) - August 1900
The Levitation of Jacob by Clifford Howard - September 1900 (aka
The Annihilator of the Undesirable)

## Bigler's Barometer.

BY SAM DAVIS.



EXISTED contemporaneously with Bigler in Virginia City, and recall the circumstance with some little degree of pride.

We all had our vices in those days, and while not mentioning my own, I will take the liberty of stating that gambling was Bigler's.

His never-ceasing desire to make merchandise out of the bad judgment of other people was notorious, and I am frank to admit that on more occasions than I would care to enumerate I have fallen a victim to his extraordinary tendencies in that direction.

Yet I feel that a proper regard for his memory compels me to say that in his halcyon days he scorned the slightest approach to underhanded play on his own part, nor would he tolerate it for a single moment in others. I recall, as I write, how he once killed a man who had cheated him at cards at the Ozark saloon at Carson City, the place of my present abiding. He had lost a couple of thousand, for which he cared little, and was proceeding on the quiet tenor of his cocktail route, when he chanced to learn, by the merest accident - he was not the man to go prowling about searching for ill of his kind — that his antagonist had resorted to the desperate extremity of nailing a rabbit foot under the table where the game had been in progress, hoping thereby to reap unfair advantage for his own unworthy ends by hoodooing his opponent. It was this reliable revelation that caused Bigler, after several minutes of mature reflection, to return to the scene of his undoing, and shoot a hole into Miles Hickey, which, according to the report of the coroner's jury, resulted in the death of the latter gentleman. Next day when before the magistrate, he remarked that his case was of such a nature that he would need no attorney, and making a statement of the simple facts as near as he could recall them, was interrupted during the recital, by the information that he was

discharged, as the honorable court had no further business with the case except to read a sharp reproof to the officious district attorney for obtruding it upon the court, at a positive expense to overburdened taxpayers. Even the plea of the dead man's attorney, that the deceased had a large family to support, was swept aside by the court as having but scant relevancy to a matter which was pure and simple self-defense, and nothing else that the court knew of.

The killing of Hickey, however, did not seem to satisfy Bigler, as it did not bring back the money he had lost, and he seemed to think the State should reimburse him. As no move was made in that direction, he vowed that, as cheating was recognized in Nevada, he should in the future take care of himself, and other people could do the same.

He lost at cards and he lost at stocks, and finally had to hire himself out to Jack Bradley as a common hostler. They had known each other in the mines, and been chummy in the old days, but Bradley had become a millionaire now, and there was a gulf between them. The only common ground they met on was the inborn disposition each had to gamble on anything that possessed the slightest ingredient of chance. Bradley considered himself something of a weather sharp, and liked above anything to bet on the possibilities of a rainstorm. He used to bet Bigler a month's salary or any part of it on the weather, and Bigler, being dead game after the manner of his class, never failed to come to the center when bantered by his employer. He sometimes won, and sometimes lost, but in the long run found that he was working for Bradley for nothing. Noting the habits and peculiarities of Bradley, he made an important discovery. It was nothing less than the fact that a few days before the weather was bad Bradley became very logy in his walk, and that prior to clear weather he was light headed or "nutty," so to speak. Pondering on this circumstance, Bigler figured out the scientific reason of it. Bradley had worked in a Virginia City pan mill before he was wealthy, and had become salivated with quicksilver. In this way he had been transformed into a human barometer, a natural product, as one might say, and much more reliable and sensitive than the manufactured article.

The way in which the quicksilver mounted to his head or settled in his lower extremities was a most positive indication of weather events; the prognostication never went astray, and his spirits rose and fell with the mercury.

After Bigler had figured this down to an allspice, he came to the center in great shape when his employer wanted to gamble on the weather. But he went into the game intelligently and with proper forethought. He let Bradley win a few small bets while he was experimenting with his system, and then lay back for big money.

The system worked like a charm, and when he was losing his money, betting the wrong way on purpose, he felt happy, for he knew just what a fine financial future was ahead of him. He allowed himself to lose so many times that he finally got odds of ten to one, and then he made ready for his series of grand coups. When he saw Bradley getting gay and predicting that the Populist party would carry thirty-four States in the Union, he considered it about time to bet on fair weather, as Bradley's talk showed very plainly that the mercury was getting to his head, and fair weather was a dead certainty. So he went over to Dun's saloon and borrowed the money to put up the spot cash. He won a cool thousand, and this made old Bradley mad and reckless, and filled with a desire to get even. When a man gets in this condition he becomes an easy game, and a certain prey to designing enemies.

Bigler went at his man while the demon of a desire to get even had full possession of him, and in a short year had his money and his real estate safe in his pocket, so to speak.

Recalling the way Bradley had given him employment in his days of poverty, he generously reciprocated the favor, and put his old employer at work on the horses the latter had once owned. In this way he had a more favorable opportunity than ever to study the weather through Bradley, — he called him Jack now, — and soon acquired a local reputation for being the greatest weather prognosticator of the far West.

It was not long, however, before he began to weary of his limited orbit, and his friends encouraged him in the ambition to fill a wider sphere, secretly hoping, of course, that the sphere aforesaid would prove too big for him to fill. They urged him to go in and make a national reputation, and cast all the other weather prophets in the shade.

Spurred on by such encouragements, he finally got the Nevada legislature to memorialize Congress to give Bigler a chance to forward a few sample prophecies to the weather bureau at Washington, just to show the department how the thing was done. The memorial also set forth the great advantages to agriculture of having a reliable weather man on deck in place of the old skates who were at that time drawing salaries to deceive the people.

In due course of time Bigler received notice that the department was ready to receive his weather prognostications. This concession had been brought about through the untiring exertions of Senator Jonas, who had left a senatorial poker game at Willard's in order to bring the matter before the attention of the government.

This honor somewhat excited Bigler, and he began to talk in his sleep. He always made Bradley sleep in the same apartment, — for old acquaintance's sake, he said, but really to have him where he could study his changes of mercurial altitude, — and he gave forth so much weather in his somnambulistic trances that Bradley began to listen.

When he heard him mutter night after night, "If Jack only knew what was in him; if he only knew the cinch' I have," and talk of that kind, Bradley went on a mental prospecting tour over himself, and like a flash he hit on the fact that he was loaded up with quicksilver, and the miserable ingrate he had called his friend had been utilizing him as a human barometer. The whole solution of the mystery came to him as rapidly as the returns on election day, that are posted up in New York several hours before the polls have closed in California. He began to wonder if the Lord would ever allow him to be sufficiently satiated with the satisfaction that was undeniably his due.

At first he decided to squash off the earth, as he would a noxious insect, the man who had robbed him of his wealth and reduced him to the level of a stable chambermaid, but after reflection he concluded to resort to strategy, and first break him of his reputation and humble him in the eyes of all the world while in the zenith of his fame.

It was easy enough. All he had to do was to pretend the quicksilver was in his head when it was in his feet, and vice versa. He began practising how to be hilarious when actually depressed, and how to be melancholy when, in reality, he was brimming with levity. The last was a simple matter, for he was naturally of a morbicund disposition; but to appear hilarious when actually depressed required greater histrionic effort. Finally, however, by practise, and the assiduous study of the humorous columns of the local press, and Joe Miller's jest book, he became a master of dissimulation.

The time arrived for Bigler to send on his first national prophecy—he was prognosticating for a continent now, and feeling nervous.

He watched Bradley like a cat. Bradley was also a good deal excited, for he realized it was the final struggle of their wits.

Although his spirits were at the top notch, he began at breakfast to complain of cold feet, and all day he grew more pensive and melancholy.

That night he asked Bigler to untie his shoe, advancing as a reason that he was unable to lift his foot up and lay his ankle over the other knee. When he crawled into bed he hinted at a desire to commit suicide.

This last remark was enough, and Bigler, rushing to the telegraph office, wired his first prophecy - a list of predictions of cloudbursts and cyclones, tempered with hail and lightning, that would have raised the hair of the American people in every town and hamlet and sent half the population to their cyclone cellars and storm caves if the papers had ever gotten hold of it. The fact that the weather department keeps its forecasts out of the press until they are over-ripe, so to speak, was all that saved it. Immediately there began such a spell of heavenly weather that Jack Bradley had to buy lead insoles for his shoes to keep himself from jumping up and down. Then came the change. He suddenly felt the subtle fluid surging into his feet, and it dropped with such a thud that only by a superhuman effort could he act chipper and happy, and reel off the jokes he had mastered. However, his desire for revenge, aided by his artistic temperament, brought him through. After three or four anxious hours, during which Bradley

saw with horror his meteorological instrument getting gayer every moment, this false prophet, now reduced to the pitiful necessity of hedging, rushed away again and sent off a second message. He said that the cyclone he had expected had met with a counter current and caromed off to the North Pacific Ocean, where it was churning a hole in the water and destroying the ships that were en route for the Arctic regions. The country could now look for a long spell of serene, delightful weather such as it had not experienced for years.

Scarcely had the bulletin been issued when the storm of the century burst upon the country and destroyed thousands of lives and millions of dollars' worth of property.

This disaster proved fatal to Bigler. Being a proud man, and unwilling to give up without a struggle, he decided to cut loose from Bradley, strike out independently, and go into training as a barometer himself. But as his age and dignity made the long preparatory course at the pan mill out of the question, he tried to hasten nature by adding a capsule of the desired element to his daily bill of fare; and died within a year, a victim to overweening scientific ambition.

Meantime, Bradley, awakened at last to the mine of wealth within him, decided to work it on his own account, and, fearing a repetition of the Bigler episode if he remained on his native heath, smuggled himself through the French Custom House, and is now at large somewhere in Europe. For that reason, if any one should, in the course of foreign travels, run up against a middle-aged, nervous, stoop-shouldered man, of markedly mercurial spirits, who wishes to bet on the weather, he'll do well to save his money. The man is no other than Bradley, the original and only Human Barometer; — and he's betting on a sure thing.



# the Black Cat

#### A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 29.

#### FEBRUARY, 1898.

5 cents a copy.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter,

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#### In the Power House.

BY CLARENCE MAIKO.

AVE you ever heard them—the voices of the juice? You can hear them every night at the Power House, when all the city sleeps; you can hear them rising from the motors of the trolley cars, and you can hear them, very plainly, sizzling around a Crooke's tube, when it is all green and

crinkly with sparkling rays; but, if you value your peace of mind, you won't listen to them. At any rate don't believe in them, for, if you do, you will find yourself entertaining very peculiar ideas about the inanimate matter they come from; ideas which, if you proclaimed them abroad, would land you in an asylum as fast as railroads and good friends could carry you.

Besides being an anarchist, the only thing the matter with Michael Casey was that all night long he listened to the voices of the juice, that came out of the whirring, sizzling, rotating things in the Power House. When the rest of the night watch were very sensibly dozing in their chairs Casey would move around with staring bright eyes, listening to the talk from the dynamos and the alternators; but his special pet was the Man-killer, a big two-thousand volt Brush machine—a gruesome, crooning shemonster.

The Man-killer knew she was not to blame for having her frame-

work grounded, but, nevertheless, she felt responsible for three killings; her conscience was very black, and the voice that came out of her was melancholy with protest and complaint. Then, she shivered because her armature was not perfectly balanced, and as the number of her vibrations happened to be the natural number belonging to a bar of steel in the field magnet, the voice of the bar had to join her in a long-sustained howl, like that of some awakened drunken thing in delirium.

She was a sick, cranky girl, and unpopular socially with her neighbors in the Power House, the lively Thomson-Houston alternators and the big purring Westinghouse dynamos; they had no blood guilt on their souls and they let her severely alone.

There was one garrulous little alternator that the Man-killer particularly hated, because he giggled and tittered at her all the time. Moreover, though he couldn't raise a current of one hundred volts, the alternator was boastful of his deeds. He had made "juice" for a theater in bygone days, and told a story of how, one night, because a scene-shifter had thrown dirt into him, his bearings became hot, and the lights in the theater began to go out; then a nervous spasm ran over the audience and they started to stampede for the doors, but his engineer was a man of sense and presence of mind; he brought great chunks of ice from the water cooler and held them on his bearings, while the alternator struggled and labored and managed to keep up enough current to light the house while the people were quieted.

He was very proud of that feat, the alternator was, and he told it often to the admiring machines in the Power House. But one day he had to yield first place as popular hero to Number 4, Westinghouse dynamo, who racked and tore himself in two to keep up the current in the trolley circuit, when two of his mates burnt their armatures. It was found out afterwards that a car, full of people, had been in the middle of the grade on Nob Hill, when the current went down, and that if Number 4 had not fought and won his fight with the "juice," the car would have slipped and rolled, killing everybody in it.

If Casey's mental tissue had not been so diseased by contact with frowsy, bewhiskered, spectacled, foreign persons down in the dimly lighted, ill-smelling haunts where those disciples of

"Force" foregathered to air their poisonous doctrines, he would have appreciated the heroism of Westinghouse Number 4, and would have smiled at the yarn of the conceited little alternator.

Being what they were, Casey and the Man-killer fell in love with one another. The Man-killer's affection for Casey was natural, because Casey fixed her insides, and freed her from pain when anything went wrong, and oiled her, and cleaned her, and sympathized with her generally; but Casey's affection for the Man-killer was unnatural and in strict violation of the First Commandment, for it was worship, the paradoxical worship of his cult for Great Sin-Stained Power.

Every one in the Power House had an awe of Casey. He knew nothing about Ohm's Law, or amperes, or volts, but he was on terms of mysterious intimacy with what he called "the juice," and we term electricity. In the diseases of the machines that ran the trolleys and lights of the city, in connection fractures, commutator flats, and insulation burnings, and in other more obscure ailments, he always diagnosed and cured when all others failed. Then his fellow-workers in the Power House, who were all honest members of the Amalgamated Order of Sons of Toil, knew something of Casey's fanatical foreign friends and were afraid.

Casey never missed their fellowship. He made up for all that and more, too, by long exchanges of confidence with his big whining pet, the Man-killer. Late at night, when the watch were busy adjusting the sparking brushes on the whirling machines, he listened for hours to the wail of her flying armature, and every little accent and quaver of her voice Casey understood. Then he used to talk back to her in a language unknown and a voice unheard. It was not pleasant to see Casey and the Man-killer having one of these chats. There was a secrecy and furtiveness in Casey's manner on those occasions, and a wicked bh-r-r bh-r-r from the voice of the machine that made one feel they were whispering things it is not good for any man to hear.

It actually made Westinghouse Number 4 blush up to the bolt heads of his frame to see them making love to one another — for he was a highly proper young thing who had been brought up very strictly. But those rogues of alternators! They acted like a young lady's little brothers, who hid under a sofa and

watched her beau kiss her. They were very provoking and the Man-killer considered their remarks highly insulting. In her opinion her relations with Casey were perfectly proper. To be sure, she had confided in Casey to an extent she never had in any one else, but then Casey loved her and understood her. She had told him how conscience smitten and unhappy she was because she had killed those three fools who should have known better; and Casey had given her absolution with an assumption of authority that made her think him commissioned by Rome. It was very good of Casey, and made her feel happier and run lighter.

When, in an exuberant frame of mind, she told the rest of the machines about it they smiled broadly and ran quiet. They knew men were very peculiar animals anyway, and when one of them understands the voices of the juice that come out of whirligig things like dynamos and alternators, and hangs around coddling a crazy, crooning she-monster like the Man-killer all night long, anything he says should be accepted with a mental reservation.

As a matter of fact, Casey was making a great mistake in trifling with the affections of the Man-killer. He had lied to her as only a villain of his deep-dyed stripe could lie; he had made her all kinds of promises, which she believed, and, happy in the attention and affection he lavished upon her, she stopped her whining howl, and began to hum softly to herself, like a happy woman sure of her husband's love.

Her armature Casey balanced to a very nearly perfect equipoise, and the voice of the bar of steel in the field-magnet had to lock itself up once more in the metal.

It is a great relief for a soul-sick, blood-stained thing like the Man-killer to have some one come and take the burden of guilt and shame away; and if you could have only heard the voice that came out of her armature in those days, — how it swam and sung through the astonished Power House, — you would have realized how she felt.

Like many of her sex, however, she was destined to be the victim of a man's wiles; for in all Casey's fair words, and coddling, and tinkering, there was a deep design. He had freed her from all her pains and aches; he had shut up the haunting, self-accusing voice of the bar of steel; he had cured her of hysteresis;

he had made her sing a happy song, and, unbeknownst to every one, he was now able to run up her current one hundred volts by tightening a few screws in her armature bearings.

The switchboard of the Power House was on the south wall of the dynamo room. It was made out of white marble, and was glistening with brass ammeters and shiny brake handles. Strung out on a line, at the height of the eyes of a man standing, were the fuse boxes of the dynamos, all wired to the feeders from the machines. A fuse is a sort of safety valve for the juice; when there is a short circuit some place outside, and an excessive current of juice is forced through the wires the fuse explodes; or, when too much current comes out of a machine the fuse melts, and the juice arcs out across the room in a blinding white flash two or three feet broad, electrocuting any live thing it hits.

Casey knew the Man-killer's fuse would not stand more than two thousand volts; an additional one hundred volts would are it, and that meant sure death to any man who happened to be standing in front of it then.

Now, among those whom Casey's frowsy brotherhood of the Red Flag had tried and sentenced in their queer sick brains was the President of the Great Company that owned the Power House, and the trolley cars, and the electric lights of the city.

He was not such a bad man, he was only a man of steely acumen and cold mathematics, who guarded, perhaps a little too harshly, the great interests entrusted to him, who ruled the Great Company with a rod of iron, and whom a rather conservative public did not quite forgive for his stand against his striking employees a year or so gone by.

Casey, of course, thought of the President of the Great Company just as a rabid dog would, and he smiled in his sleep when he dreamed he saw the Great Man standing in front of the Mankiller's fuse on the switchboard, during one of his inspection tours. He could imagine that broad sheet of flame striking fair in the middle of the President's fat white neck; he could almost hear the juice sizzling through him; then a faint smell of charred flesh and the brain picture of the horror-stricken crowd of employees would make him start and wake up gasping in his bed. He dreamed of those things over and over many times, and waited

and longed for the day when a few turns given to the screws in the Man-killer's armature bearings would see it all accomplished.

All this time the Man-killer, oblivious of the dark design that was brewing in Casey's mind, went on crooning softly to herself, happy in her new-found peace and comfort. She did not mind the merry jibes of the alternators, who had become quite sociable; and even the Westinghouse dynamos unbent a little and talked to her in a cordial tone of good-will and fellowship. The voices grew positively hilarious down at the Power House in those days, and when a little Edison General machine made a Fourth of July celebration by burning its pinwheel armature and showering every one with sparks and flying solder and copper wire, the machines took it in good part and shook with merriment.

In and about among them all, listening to the voices, with pale face and feverish eyes, went Casey, stopping every now and then to whisper to the Man-killer, who was piping along joyous and contented, freed from the blood guilt that had troubled her, and trusting wholly the man that watched and tended her so carefully.

What made Casey change from night shift to day shift nobody knew, any more than they knew why Casey always watched with hungry eyes the office door, by which, once a month or so, the President of the Great Company and the Chief Engineer entered the dynamo room on their routine tours of inspection. But then, there are many things happening in a Power House that wise people do not know about, wise insurance people and wise inspectors of water pipes particularly. Day by day, patiently waiting for the curtain to rise on his tragedy, Michael Casey, anarchist, pawed and fondled the unsuspecting machine that was to do murder for him so surely, swiftly, and secretly. His mind was tranquil and at ease — absolutely nothing could go wrong — discovery was absurdly beyond every possibility and question. He was to be at his usual place behind the Man-killer adjusting the sparking brushes. When the right time had come, the screws in her armature bearings were to be given a twist, and the work would be done. He laughed quietly to himself when he thought of the search party going out over the tracks to find where the short circuit had come from, and he smiled as he imagined the wise heads

in the office suggesting arcing cross wires underground, or lightning strokes, or insulation leaks as the possible causes.

Strange it was that it never occurred to Casey that he was trifling with the affections of the Man-killer; that there was a possibility of terrifle revolt on her part when she realized how she had been deceived, and was asked to prostitute herself for the commission of the vile and cowardly crime he meditated. It seems as if Casey, who had listened to and believed in the voices of the juice, who knew and understood how the poor, crazy, mad thing used to shudder at her blood-guiltiness when the voices from the other machines cried out to her, "Shame! Shame!"—it seems as though Casey ought to have had some sort of premonition of what would come. But as we have said before, besides listening too much to the talk of whirliging things, Casey was a red-eyed anarchist.

The tragedy began in the foreordained and providential manner its author wished. The overture was chorused by the voices of the juice, and Casey was the only one who understood and grasped the theme. It was rather long drawn out for Casey, because he knew the President of the Great Company was outside in the office talking business with the Chief Engineer, preparatory to going the rounds of the dynamo room. The weather was especially favorable for short circuits; sullen, lowering rain-clouds blackened the sky, and every now and then Casey could see white forks of lightning flash zigzagging across the skylight above.

The Man-killer was telling her friend Westinghouse Number 4 — they were very familiar now — how happy she was freed from her hysterics and melancholy.

"My morbidness, dear," she said, "I have all put aside, and if I ever get the chance to do anything grand and noble,—like what you did the day you saved all those people in the trolley car,—I shall do it. You see!"

Westinghouse Number 4, who was modest, blushed at this allusion to his heroism, and stammered out something about the pleasure it gave him to hear her good resolutions, and his confidence in her ability to beat him hollow if she had a chance.

Casey, standing by his machine, heard it all, but paid little

attention to it, for his eyes were fastened eagerly on the office door, which had just swung open with a bang.

In the frame of the doorway stood the tall figure of the President of the Gréat Company. He was dressed, as usual, in a long black frock coat, and he wore a tall silk hat under which the stern, grim features that Casey saw so often in his dreams shone out cold and clear. He stood there some seconds speaking over his shoulder to the Chief Engineer behind him. Around his neck was a high collar, over which bulged a layer of fat, white flesh, and to that Casey's eyes were drawn with irresistible fascination.

It seemed an age to Casey that they stood there talking, while little smoke wreaths from their cigars floated over on the heavy air for him to sniff at.

Mr. Kipling has told us authoritatively that a marine engine and a locomotive are the most sensitive things the hand of man ever made; which proves that Mr. Kipling never knew a dynamo intimately. Around every little molecule of metal in it are invisible eddying, shooting currents, ever at war with one another, attracting, repelling, disappearing and coming again, in a marvelous and inexplicable manner. Surely the pulses of no live thing ever throbbed as does each atom of steel in one of these machines.

Perhaps it was something in the tense, heavy atmosphere; perhaps, like its cousin the Roentgen Ray, the juice penetrated the dark depths of Casey's mind and told the Man-killer what Casey was going to do; anyhow, down in the bowels of the machine some very funny things were happening; all the little currents, by a strange coincidence, were running together, and a great volume of force was rolling up in the bed and frame.

The President of the Great Company and the Chief Engineer had come in and were walking around here and there among the whirligig things, talking in low tones.

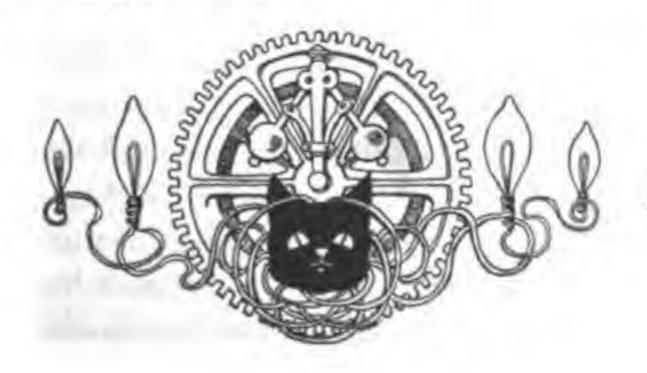
Impatiently fingering a tiny screwdriver, Casey followed them everywhere with his eyes glued on a rim of fat, white flesh lapping over the President's high collar. It seemed to him as if they would never get in front of the switchboard.

The voices of the juice had risen louder, and sounded like a grand choir singing a hymn of grave and awful warning, while the soft croon of the Man-killer had sharpened off into a wailing dirge.

Then the moment came; the tall silk hat turned sharply about, followed by the other man, and walked straight over to the switchboard, halting just in front of the Man-killer's fuse. Never taking his eyes off that sagging ring of white above his victim's collar, Casey felt for the screws. But at the crucial moment his hands, unguided by his keen eyes, missed their mark, and grazed the frame of the machine. Then into Casey rushed the enormous charge of juice that the Man-killer had accumulated from the running together of all those little currents in its bowels. Into an apish squatting posture Casey was drawn, his hands stretched out before him in awful appeal to the infuriated monster he had intended to betray. The muscles of his face twitched horribly; he could not cry out, for his jaws were shut like those of a tetanus patient. His face grew blue, then purple, while pink froth hung from his lips. In the calves of his legs and in his wrists great lumps of agony gathered, and his eyes bulged from their sockets. Suddenly he became numb and was conscious only of wonderful music - the music of the juice - the sweetest thing living man ever heard — the mysterious music which every one who is electrocuted hears just before death, and hearing, dies supremely happy.

A faint smell of burnt flesh made the President of the Great Company turn around, sniffing; and then he uttered a startled cry, for there, staring straight into his, with a terrifying suggestiveness, were the two dead, uncanny, bulging eyes of Michael Casey, anarchist and traitor.

The chorus of the voices that came out of the whirling armatures had risen into a wild, weird chant, but shriller, higher than all the rest sounded the wail of the Man-killer; for the voice of the steel bar had come to life again, and joined it in a morbid howl, like something damned.



(From The Journalist, New York, Dec. 25, 1897.)

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(From the New York Press, Dec. 4, 1897.)

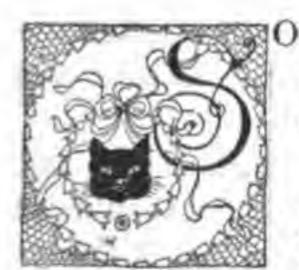
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marvel of the story-telling art,

### The Block of Bronze.

BY HERBERT W. CROTZER.



you good people thought I gave you 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' did you?"

"Well, yes," I replied; "we all noticed how your story coincided with what has been published concerning your operations, and we were

especially struck with the way you seemed to cover all the details of the job; how anxious, in fact, you appeared to be to leave out no point or circumstance that would throw light on your subject."

"Just so," said my friend; "I noticed that you all seemed to take it in as gospel truth, but the fact is, Frank, the most remarkable thing that happened over there was omitted from my yarn altogether."

I gazed at the speaker in astonishment, but he pulled away at his disreputable old pipe as unconcernedly as if he had said the most natural thing in the world.

Edward Van Zant, the explorer, was my lifelong friend, college chum, and now my honored guest.

At college, Ned went in for dead and hidden things, archæology, and all that; and, after absorbing all that the best schools of this and other countries could teach on those lines, he started in, digging here, prodding there, until he had punctured holes in the earth's crust in pretty much every country on the globe.

Now, after ten years of this sort of thing, he was back in his native city, with a hat full of medals and decorations, and his fame as an explorer and archæologist established throughout civilization.

We had just returned from a dinner given in his honor by a local scientific body, and had adjourned to the library for a smoke and a chat before retiring. Our talk, so far, had referred to his little speech concerning his latest most important discoveries in Egypt, and to the effect it had produced upon his hearers.

That he should now acknowledge having intentionally omitted facts of importance bearing upon his work was, to put it mildly, an eye-opener, and I could only look the astonishment I felt.

After a few thoughtful puffs, Ned said: "Frank, what really did happen is so strange, so inconceivable, that were I to tell the story to the world, it would laugh at me, say I lied, or was crazy."

"See here," he exclaimed, throwing off coat and collar, and uncovering the upper portion of his brawny chest and shoulders; here's a bit of evidence of the truth of my tale, that I always carry with me."

I looked, and on his throat, underneath the heavy beard, I beheld a lot of scars which, extending downward, spread out into rows that covered every inch almost of the body exposed to view. It looked as if some sharp-toothed instrument, like a rake, had gouged out the flesh, or as though the man had been seared by hot irons.

- "Good heavens!" I cried. "What beast or thing did that?"
- "Aye, you may well put it that way," replied Ned, resuming his garments and seat; "it was a Thing, the most horrible God ever allowed on His footstool.
- "I told you this evening," he went on, "that I had set out to investigate a small pyramid which stood in the desert, a mile or two from the oasis that had been my base of operations while exploring in that part of Egypt. I explained how we spent weeks digging and sounding before success rewarded us; how we finally broke into the tomb underneath the pyramid, and discovered the mummies and the stores of jewels and ornaments, which proved that the bodies had lain there, undisturbed by mortal hand, since the days they were buried—six thousand years before. All these things occurred precisely as I stated. There was nothing here to conceal.
- "You also heard of the attempt made to steal some of our treasures from the building in which they were temporarily stored; how one of my men on guard at the time was murdered,

and how I, while seeking traces of the murderer in the camp of a band of roving Arabs, was attacked in the tent of the sheik, and forced to kill that individual to save my own life. That part of the story was true enough, so far as it went, but the most important facts were omitted. What actually did occur was this:—

"After working for weeks on the job, and gaining nothing but hard labor for our pains, I got discouraged, and one evening I announced to the men that if the next day or two brought no better luck, I would abandon the undertaking. I also told them that, in order to be in good trim for what might be our last attempt, they should do no work next day, and suggested that they should go to headquarters at once and take a rest. They were glad enough to get a holiday, after working as they had done, and soon all hands were on their way to the oasis, where my party, with the exception of the native laborers, put up when off duty.

"I remained in camp, and early next morning made a tour of the diggings. I examined every hole and sounding, made careful measurements, and tried to think out some new plan of operation that would yield tangible results. Finally, I returned to my tent and was about to seat myself in front of it, when I happened to see far out on the desert what my field-glass showed me was a caravan. It was a small affair—a dozen camels, loaded, and as many horsemen. It was headed for the oasis, and would come no nearer to the pyramid.

"As I stood watching the travelers, a horseman, riding ahead, left the column, and followed closely by what seemed, at that distance, a child, also mounted, rode rapidly towards me, the rest continuing on their way. When they got within several rods of me the pair pulled up, and the man, dismounting, stood quietly while his little companion proceeded to the pyramid and passed behind it, out of sight, followed by the riderless horse. Then the stranger walked forward until but a few yards separated us, when he stopped, and, instead of the usual salaam, made a profound bow. He uttered not a word, but stood with arms folded, as if waiting for me to address him. He was very tall, straight as a spear, and wore the ordinary long white garment of the desert tribes.

- "Irritated by the man's silence, I finally cried out, in Arabic, Who are you, and what do you want?'
- "At this, my visitor came up close to me, replying as he did so, 'Who I am matters little; what I want you will give me in return for services I shall render you.'
- "I was astonished, as you may well suppose, but ere I could speak, he continued: 'I know you are Edward Van Zant, the explorer. I know what you expect to find here, and how you have worked, without avail, until you have become discouraged. How I know these things concerns me alone. What concerns you is the fact that I, and I alone, can show you how to enter the tomb, which is here, as you surmise, and I will do so, provided you give me my choice of what you may find in it.'
- "Although amazed at the man's knowledge of me and my movements, and distrusting him instinctively, I determined to force his hand, if possible, and find out his demands and what he proposed to do.
- "Inviting him to sit down on a block of stone at my side, I said, 'You seem to know so much, and to be so powerful, why haven't you opened this tomb yourself?'
- "'Because,' he replied, 'to do so requires engineering skill and mechanical appliances, which it is impossible for me to obtain hereabouts.'
- "'What do you require in payment for your services?' was my next query.
  - " 'A mummy,' he replied.
- "'A mummy!' I exclaimed; 'why, these are the things I am most anxious to find myself, and you may demand what is of the greatest value to me.'
- "'Listen,' said the man; 'you will find bodies of kings and queens who lived at a time of which man has no record. These shall be yours, together with all the jewels and ornaments buried with them. You will also discover a case in which is the body of a dwarf, an insignificant thing compared with the other treasures. This case and contents are all I ask, and I swear there is nothing in them that would be of value to you. As a guarantee that I am not trifling or trying to deceive you, take these; 'saying which, he drew out a small pouch, from which he poured into my hands a

dozen or more of the finest diamonds I ever saw. 'If I fail you in any way,' he continued, 'or you do not find everything as I say, these shall be yours.'

"To be brief, I agreed to the proposal, the Arab accepting my verbal promise to live up to the contract.

"'Now,' said he, when the preliminaries were settled — and here is where the incomprehensible part of the affair begins — 'I will fulfill my part of the agreement.'

"With this he gave a shrill whistle, following upon which the little fellow came out from behind the pyramid, and, with the other horse by his side, rode up to us and dismounted. Making a low bow to me, he stepped in front of the other and gazed, without a word, into his face, as if awaiting a command.

"I now saw that, instead of being a child, the newcomer was a dwarf, twenty years old, or thereabouts. He was a handsome, dark-eyed little fellow, with a red fez and zouave-like outfit that became him well. That he was uncommonly active and powerful, I had reason to thank my stars later on.

"At a word, in some strange dialect, the dwarf detached from the Arab's saddle and handed him a scimitar, the hilt and scabbard of which were covered with some scaly material that I afterward found to be the skin of a snake.

"Another word or two, in the same unknown tongue, and the little man drew back and faced the big one. As he did so, I caught a look of aversion on his face, and his eyes gleamed as if with hatred or defiance. The Arab noticed the look and returned it with an ugly scowl and a growl that sounded like a threat.

"Arising from his seat, he unsheathed the blade, and the next moment the dwarf seemed to be standing in the midst of a rain of fire. The Arab was laying about him with the weapon, and such sword play, I'm free to say, I never saw before, and never will see again while I live.

"The exhibition ceased as suddenly as it began. The dwarf stood with arms folded, and a queer, far-away look in his eyes. The Arab gazed at him a moment, and then, tearing the covering from the hilt, held that part of the scimitar close to his face.

"The hilt was of gold, beautifully chased and set with gems. On the end was an immense diamond that blazed in the sunlight

like flame, and this was waved slowly before the dwarf's eyes until the lids dropped and he seemingly slept.

"As the Arab sheathed the sword and replaced the covering on the hilt, he said, 'Ali grows rebellious and objects to serving me; he must be disciplined.' Then, producing a sheet of paper and pencil, he laid them on the stone he had vacated, and, stepping in front of his subject, he gave what seemed to be a command in a loud, imperious tone, and in the same outlandish tongue he had used before.

"In a few moments the dwarf made reply in a muffled voice that sounded as if it came from underground.

"Then, as though interpreting, the Arab said, 'He tells me a great rock closes the entrance to the tunnel leading to the tomb, but he has passed through it.'

"For the next few minutes not a word was spoken. Then came a little cry from the dwarf, followed by a few sentences in a broken, gasping voice, as of one utterly exhausted. At another command, he staggered to the stone, and, seizing the pencil, he rapidly laid off on the paper what looked like the ground plan of a building. A lot of writing followed, and when this was completed the Arab handed me what turned out to be an accurate plan of the tomb and tunnel, with full directions for entering them.

"As Ali finished, he fell over in a dead faint; but a few drops from a vial, which the Arab held to his lips, soon restored him. Then the strange pair mounted and set off towards the oasis, and that was the last I saw of them for some days.

. "In the evening I rode back to camp, where I learned that the newcomers had pitched their tents on the outskirts of the oasis, and seemed a quiet, well-disposed lot.

"I told my associates that the sheik had visited me and given me certain directions for finding and entering the tomb, for which, if they proved correct, he was to receive an ordinary mummy, in case any such were found.

"Not until we broke into the tomb and laid profane hands upon its contents, did the sheik put in an appearance at the workings.

"On that momentous day he came, bright and early, accom-

panied by four of his people, big, solemn-looking fellows. Seeking me out, he obtained permission to enter the tomb with me, and while there, no movement of ours, as we opened sarcophagi and took out mummies, jewels, and what not, escaped his watchful eye.

"For a long time there was no sign of the wooden case, but when most of the things had been removed he called attention to a crack in the wall in front of him. A few blows of a pick disclosed a niche, the front of which had been walled up. Within stood upright a covered box, and in this we found, as the Arab foretold, the body of a dwarf. It was that of a man with immensely broad shoulders, and arms reaching nearly to the knees. The face was hideous, and a ferocious smile had drawn the thin lips apart, disclosing teeth sharp, and gleaming like those of a beast.

"Strange to say, the body was not swathed in bandages, as mummies always are, but was clothed in a loose garment of some peculiar stuff that bore our rough handling without a break.

"Great bunches of muscle covered the frame, and nowhere was there an opening or, in fact, any indication that an internal organ had been removed, as is always done in the case of mummies.

"The body, with its stiffened limbs, was like that of one in a cataleptic fit or trance, and represented, as I supposed, some strange and wonderful process of embalming, of which this was the only specimen in existence.

"The head rested on an oblong block, covered with a piece of the same material of which the garment was made, and on this odd pillow the Arab's eyes were fastened with the most intense eagerness. Before I could lay a hand on it, he had replaced the lid of the box, saying as he did so, 'I suppose I may take this now? You have seen how insignificant it is, and I desire to get it to my tent at once.'

"Reluctantly I gave my consent, and his own men carried the case to the surface and placed it in the cart I loaned him to convey his prize to camp.

"An hour or two after they left, we found in the niche, under some rubbish, what I took to be a block of bronze. It was about

twice the size of a common brick, quite heavy, and on every side it was inlaid with gold in strange designs. I sent it up to be put with the other stuff in the storeroom, and shortly afterward was told that the sheik was above, asking to see me privately. When, at my request, he joined me in the tomb, he was greatly excited, and his first words were, 'I have lost a small bronze block belonging to that case; have you seen it about here?'

- "'My friend,' I said, 'in return for your services I agreed to give you a certain case and contents. Have I fulfilled my promise?' He replied, 'Yes, but' 'All bronze blocks,' I put in, 'and everything else, outside the case, belong to me and I shall keep them.'
- "At this the sheik said not another word, but, with a murderous scowl on his face, turned and left the pit.
- "Upon quitting work for the day, I went to the storeroom and hid the block in a corner, under a pile of tools. Later, when my assistants had gone back to headquarters, and the laborers had settled down for the night, I called in Sam, my African servant, and one of the native laborers, an intelligent, trustworthy Arab, and arranged with them for guarding the storehouse during the night. I was to take the first and longest watch, Sam the next, and the native the last, which would end when the camp was astir in the morning.
- "This plan was carried out, and nothing occurred while either myself or Sam was on duty. When the Arab took his post, I examined the building inside and out, but found the block in place and everything in proper condition.
- "Upon resuming my bunk, where I had slept like a top through Sam's watch, I found that sleep had deserted me, and for more than an hour I tossed about, unable to close my eyes. At last I dropped off into a doze, from which, a few minutes later, I awoke with a start. Something had disturbed me, I knew not what, but a faint echo seemed to ring in my ears, as of a voice calling for help.
- "Jumping up, I made for the storehouse at the top of my speed.
- "The moon had not yet gone down, so that objects near by were fairly visible.

- "When close to the building, I saw what brought me up standing.
- "The door stood wide open, and some one was moving about inside!
  - "The Arab was nowhere in sight ...
- "Approaching close to the opening, I called out the man's name. There was no reply, and the noise within ceased.
- "As I stood there, peering into the dark room, there was a sudden scrambling, a horrible, snarling cry, and out of the doorway came something on all fours which, leaping past me like a flash, was out of sight almost before I could move.
- "Recovering my wits, which, I confess, were scared out of me for the moment, I was inside the room and at the hiding place with a lantern in short order.
  - "The block was gone!
- "A hasty examination showed that nothing else was disturbed, and that the door had been forced by pressure from without; the broken lock, and screws torn from the wood, indicating that extraordinary force had been applied.
- "Outside, lying on his back, close to the building, I found the watchman. The poor fellow was dead. His neck was broken, his face distorted with fear and horror, and upon his throat were deep scratches, from which the blood was still flowing.
- "Arousing the camp, I had the body taken to the hospital tent, and explained to the men that their comrade had been murdered by a burglar who failed to secure anything of value.
- "What it was that did the deed, I could not imagine, but I felt assured that the sheik was the responsible party, and determined to visit him at an early hour.
- "Soon after sunrise, I was standing in front of my tent, when, to my surprise, Ali, the dwarf, rode up at a furious gallop. Without dismounting or uttering a word, he thrust into my hand a folded paper and, turning, was off again like a shot. The paper contained these words:—
- "The sheik sleeps, and I have stolen away. He has sworn you shall die as did your guard. If you are brave, come to his tent at midnight with axe and knife. The guards will sleep, and I will help you. The block is—'

- "Here the note broke off abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted, and just what he meant by that reference to the block I'd have given something to know.
- "That evening I went back to headquarters with the rest, leaving the storehouse in charge of an assistant and armed guards.
- "I believed that Ali's note was written in good faith, and determined to act as he advised, but alone, and without the knowledge of any of my people.
- "Shortly before midnight I was in the vicinity of the sheik's tent, which stood near the edge of the oasis, its entrance facing the desert.
- "As I cautiously approached the door, the moonlight enabled me to see, stretched on the ground in front of it, the body of a man, his hands clasping a long gun. Already one of Ali's statements was verified. The guard slept, and soundly too, I could see that.
- "Just then the sheik's voice rang out in a sort of wild chant, and I prepared for action.
- "Securing the broad-bladed hatchet I had brought with me, to my wrist, by means of a leather loop on the handle, and carrying a stout hunting knife in the other hand, I stepped over the sleeper and peered into the tent. A tall screen in front of the door cut off my view completely. Then I crawled through the opening and stood behind the screen. Cutting a slit in this with my knife, I could see that rugs and skins covered the ground, and screens stood at the sides, and at the opposite end of the tent, which was large and oblong in shape. In the center was a table, draped in black, and in front of this, with his back towards me, stood the Arab.
- "He wore a black robe that reached from his neck to his heels, and in his right hand was a short, black rod, which waved back and forth in unison with the chant.
- "On the table I could see the bronze block, and beside it lay the beautiful scimitar, its hilt glittering in the rays of the lamp that hung from the top of the tent.
- "Neither Ali nor the case was in sight, but I felt confident that the dwarf was near, ready to lend a hand, if necessary.

- "With weapons ready for instant use, I moved towards the table, and my hand was already on the block before the Arab knew I was there.
- "A startled cry fell from his lips as he saw me. His hand flew to the sword, and, quicker than I can tell it, he aimed a blow which, had it reached me, would have split me to the shoulders.
- "A leap aside, however, saved me, and before he could straighten himself, I dropped the hatchet and sent in a right-hander that nearly lifted him off his feet. He recovered himself, though, like a born prize-fighter, and, with blood streaming from his nose and mouth, and a hellish fire blazing in his eyes, he sprang at me again.
- "But just then a gleam of light flashed by me and I heard a dull, crunching sound. The Arab's rush was suddenly checked. His sword wavered an instant, and then fell to the ground. The hand that held it dropped and closed convulsively upon something that protruded from his breast. It was instantly withdrawn, and with it, the fingers already stiffening around the haft, came a long, broad-bladed knife, dripping with blood. A dark stream followed and flowed over the long robe.
- "The Arab swayed to and fro several times; then, with a gurgling, choking cry, he fell to the ground, dead!
- "As if in response to the cry, and before I could turn to see where the knife came from, I heard a savage snarl, and something sprang upon me from behind. A pair of long, brown arms were clasped round my neck, and instantly my clothing was being torn to shreds and my flesh gashed by fingers that were more like claws of steel.
- "So sudden and fierce was the attack that I staggered forward and would have fallen, had not my assailant's backward tug kept me on my feet.
- "My throat seemed to be the point aimed at, and in its mad efforts to reach this, the beast, or whatever it was, soon had my shoulders laid bare and channels dug into my flesh, from which the blood ran in streams.
- "I am a powerful man, as you know, Frank, but in the grasp of this fiend I was helpless as a child. Try as I might, I could

not shake him off, and my utmost exertions failed to prevent his inhuman gouging and tearing.

- "I had dropped my knife when first attacked, and all I could do was to hold my head down to protect my throat, and make an occasional futile stroke with the hatchet.
  - "Soon I began to grow weak from loss of blood.
- "I wondered vaguely what had become of Ali, and, in a voice scarcely audible, I called upon him for help.
- "As I did so, my head went back with a jerk and the sharp claws sank into my throat.
- "Death in a frightful form was very close to me when Ali's shout of encouragement reached my ears, and I felt, rather than heard, quick blows falling upon the body of my assailant.
- "The pressure on my throat relaxed, the terrible arms dropped from my shoulders, and I was free!
- "I fell against the table, gasping for breath, but still conscious that another struggle was going on near me, and that Ali might be needing help, as I had.
- "Pulling myself together, I turned to take a hand, when, as I am a living man, Frank, I found myself gazing upon the mummy we had resurrected!
- "There was no mistaking that stumpy, powerful body, or those features, now distorted with rage, and more horrible than ever.
- "Just now it was facing me, making short, savage rushes at Ali, who, knife in hand, eluded the attacks with wonderful agility, driving the blade into the Thing at its every attempt to reach him.
- "Stiff with horror and unable to stir, I watched the fight until Ali, in avoiding a vicious rush, slipped and, ere he could recover himself, was in the clutches of the monster.
- "With one long arm it hugged the little fellow close to its body, and the free hand was already at his throat before the power to move returned to me.
- "Then, staggering forward, I raised the heavy hatchet and, with all the strength in me, I brought it down squarely upon the top of the ugly head.
- "I heard the crash and saw the blade eat its way through the skull to the neck,—and then I fainted.
  - "The next thing I knew, I was lying on a pile of rugs, and Ali

was busy patching me up. So potent were his remedies and treatment that, in a little while, I was on my feet nearly as strong as ever, and feeling only a trifling pain from my injuries.

- "Where is the mummy?' was my first query.
- "'I chopped the accursed thing up, and my men are now burning it,' Ali replied.
- "'You and I, this night,' he went on, 'rid the world of two monsters. How the sheik put life into the Thing, I know not. He had strange powers. He knew you tomb existed, and that in it was the body of one who, ages ago, had been a high priest and mighty magician. He knew that with the priest were buried his profoundest secrets—those by which he controlled the elements, and even life itself.
- "He knew, moreover, by what dread means the priest had preserved his trance-like existence through all these centuries, and had acquired the formula by which life could be restored to the body.
- "Many of his mysteries he learned through me by various unholy methods, one of which you witnessed; but his prying into things forbidden was hateful to me, and I often refused to aid him, until beaten into submission.
- "The sheik was aware that the priest's secrets were contained in a bronze casket, and this, he believed, was in the case with the body. In the thing under the priest's head he was sure he beheld the object of his search, and when he found this to be nothing but a block of wood, he was mad with rage and disappointment. He knew, then, that the casket must be in your possession, and your refusal to give it to him did not tend to lessen his anger. So furious, indeed, was he, that he beat me cruelly, and swore he would get the casket if he had to kill you all.
  - " I then swore I would kill him for beating me.
- "At night the miracle was performed that let loose the evil one, whose first act was to murder your guard and bring back the box.
- "'This night he would have opened it and disclosed its mysteries to the sheik, who, once master of them, would have made the other his slave, else taken his life for good.
  - "'Here is the casket,' continued Ali, handing me what I had

hitherto thought to be a block of bronze; 'take it, but never dream of looking inside. The contents would make one, able to secure and use them, the most powerful of all created beings; but woe to him who would handle them, or even attempt to open the casket, without proper knowledge. This knowledge is now lost forever, and I would bury the unholy thing where none would ever find it, were I not sure it would be safe with you.

- "'Take this, also, as a token of my regard and slight return for saving my life,' and he put into my hand the magnificent scimitar, sheathed, and in its snakeskin covering.
- "'The sheik,' he went on, ignoring my objections to receiving so valuable a gift, 'claimed to be my father. He lied; but as I am recognized as his son by my tribe, I shall succeed him, and all his possessions are mine.'
- "Here I endeavored to force upon him the diamonds left by the sheik as a pledge; but Ali refused them, saying, that as the sheik had broken his agreement, the jewels were rightfully mine.
- "As to the death of the sheik, that had been explained, he said, to his people as the result of an attempt of the Arab's to murder me; and having been a cruel task-master, his death caused joy rather than grief.
- "Already the body was being prepared for removal, and in a few hours, the boy explained, they would start for home.
- "Where that home was, or how reached, however, Ali obstinately refused to tell me, and from the moment when I rode away from the door of his tent, where he stood motionless, watching me until he faded out of sight, I have never seen nor heard from this savior of my life.
- "My wounds I had no occasion to exhibit, and so easily accounted for as the result of my fight with the Arab, my version of which was the more readily accepted as that night the strangers disappeared, leaving no trace behind them.
- "Thanks to Ali's ointment, my injuries soon healed, and to this day, Frank, you are the only one to whom I have ever told their history.
  - "Do you wonder at my silence?"

### The Cross of Fire.

#### BY BERT LESTON TAYLOR AND EDWARD WARD.



HE footing grew rapidly more toilsome. At every step now I sank ankle-deep in mud and water, sometimes settling to my knees. My light bamboo rod had become a rod of iron, my basket an old man of the sea; and had my feet been encased in shoes of lead they could have

borne me scarce less willingly. Panting, puffing, and perspiring, I thew myself across the prostrate form of a long ago king of the forest; the huge trunk crumbled like Dead Sea fruit beneath my weight. Startled by this unexpected dissolution, I scrambled back to my feet. Then the heart-chilling truth struck me like a blow in the face.

I was lost! - lost in the heart of the Maine forest!

Familiar though you may be with those vast woods, stretching for scores of miles uninterrupted save by lake and stream, you, who have never been lost in them, can have but a faint conception of the numbing terror that gripped my heartstrings; while to the man who has never penetrated the depths of the primitive forest a description of my sensations must seem wild exaggeration.

I stood stunned, looking about me with eyes that I felt were starting from their sockets. The smiles on Nature's face swiftly changed to scowls; the soft, spicy breath of the woodland became the chill of the tomb, and the damp, moss-draped trees its moldering walls; the merry note of the thrush rang in my ears as the raven's croak of woe.

Then, as if pursued by the mocking hosts of Pan, I fled through the swamp, recking little now of mud and water which splashed to my eyes at every plunge; hither, thither, aimlessly, blindly, until I sank exhausted upon the spongy floor of the forest.

I shouted with what power was yet in my lungs, straining my ears the while for the answering call that did not come. My

voice was lost, absorbed, in the fungus of the trees and the moss of the ground,

I tore to tatters the bushes around me and dug my fingers deep in the carpet of eternal green. I wept "like a three years' child," sobbing and laughing by turns. And when my voice had dwindled to a whisper, when I could no longer beat back the fluttering wings of Silence, I sat in black despair, with my head bowed in my hands, that I might not see the grim, relentless savagery of my environs.

Reason slowly returned, and with it came a feeling of deep shame. Was I a woman? Could a woman have been weaker? "Courage, man!" I chided, and I tried to laugh as I finished the quotation,—"the hurt cannot be much." Men had been lost in the forest before, and some of them had returned.

Reflection suggested that, as the lake by which my guide had pitched our temporary camp must drain the country for miles about it, any stream I might chance upon would lead me to it. Later I knew, as you know, the folly of such a conclusion in such a country, where a man may, by short carries, pass from one stream to another flowing in an opposite direction. But the conclusion heartened me, and I contemplated with a growing calm the difficulties which lay between me and the civilization which even a lonely camp and a single comrade meant. "Every man his own Moses," I said lightly, and I wondered how one of the children of Israel would have fared if separated from that oldest of guides. I reeled up my line, flung away the shattered joints of the rod, took a drink from a well-filled flask, and started. It was now one o'clock.

I stroye to keep a straight course, turning aside only for the greater obstructions, that I might minimize the circling so fatal to the compassless and inexperienced traveler. My persistence was rewarded. The cedar swamp gave place to firmer ground; I crossed a ridge, and passing over a gently descending slope, came with no little satisfaction upon a brook. This brought me, in the space of an hour, to a sizeable stream, along the banks of which I was enabled to travel at a much more rapid pace.

The afternoon drifted into twilight, my stock of courage declining with the sun. I now accelerated my pace, leaping from rock

to rock, and splashing through pools instead of going around them, when I found my progress temporarily checked by a huge mass of fallen and drifted trees that choked the narrow gorge through which the stream wound. As I stood surveying this formidable barrier I fancied I saw, through the network of decaying brush, the farewell rays of the setting sun. This betokened a clearing, and with renewed courage I cut with my hunting knife a passage through the boughy labyrinth.

The lake at last!

I stood on the dark shore and shouted; a loon answered me. I discharged my revolver into the air, saving the last cartridge; I might need that, I reflected. Besides, what need of wasting breath and ammunition? My guide would see the light of a fire, and would know that I was safe; and if he had found the canoe where I had beached it at the outlet, he would put in an appearance before long. I anticipated his quiet "I told you so,"—a convincing answer to my superior smile when, that morning, he earnestly warned me, who had no knowledge of the woods, against sallying forth without his companionship. His fears had been well grounded, but, thank fortune, no great harm was done.

I kindled a blaze, fed it with fuel ripped from the under side of a dead tree, as I had seen the guide do, and cooked some of the forgotten trout in my creel. After an unpalatable meal, washed down with the warm water of the lake, I smoked a pipe of comfort before the sputtering fire, which recalled the philosophical reflection that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The cheery heat induced a speedy drowsiness, and, dismissing expectation of seeing my fishing companion that night, I hauled a backlog for the fire and piled it high with brush, and lay down to dreams of a pleasanter morrow.

When I awoke, my limbs were cramped from cold and the exertions of the preceding day, but I turned toward the lake with expectant eyes. One look, and a chill crept into my heart.

It was not the lake I sought!

You, secure in your environments, have stood upon such a shore and looked upon such a picture. Nature's lines were unblurred by the smoke from campfire of fisherman or lumberer. The distant, wood-girt shores were without sign of man or beast. The mist that hung upon the surface of the lake was as yet unstirred by the rays of the forest-hidden sun. Not a trout leaped, not a tree swayed, not a bird soared into the deepening blue. The solitude was complete; there was nothing lacking. It was Balzac's picture of the desert; it was God without mankind!

You, I say, have looked upon such a scene; but it has been with a poet's eye and an artist's sense of the beautiful. You have turned from it uplifted, and thought of life. I turned from it crushed, and thought of death!

It would be as tedious as impossible to detail my wanderings of the ensuing five days. Mile upon mile I drifted, following the windings of the shores of lakes and the banks of streams, living on fish when hunger compelled me to a nauseous meal, and on what few berries I could find; cut and bruised by countless falls, drenched by rains and tortured by insects. I dreaded the approach of night; I shuddered when I woke and faced another day. Even now I do not like to think upon that time. My hair is bleached; it whitened then. Let me come to the afternoon of the seventh day, when I found myself too weak to continue the struggle for existence. My feet were torn and bleeding, my clothing was in shreds, the liquor which had sustained me was gone, to the last precious golden drop, and I shook with fever. A light rain was falling.

I stood in a narrow cañon on the bank of a wild and rocky stream. Above me was a dull, gray sky; around me a shaggy, dripping wall of green. I took from my pocket the single cartridge and watched it with burning, fascinated eyes as it rolled about in my trembling palm. To me it was no longer lead and brass; it was a precious stone set in a tiny cylinder of gold—a gem that I would not then have exchanged for the crown jewels of an emperor. For this meant release from an existence that had become hideous.

And yet, in that awful moment, I clung to the hope that perishes only with life. Clutching fast that solitary cartridge, I shouted — once, twice, thrice. The dull roar of the rapids was the answer.

I loaded the revolver. "God forgive me!" I murmured, and cast my eyes upward.

At that instant I saw a face — the face of a man!

He was peering down at me from among the bushes that fringed the brink of a cataract which I stood facing. It was an old, a half-savage face, framed in a shock of long, unkempt, graying hair, and lighted by eyes that glittered behind shaggy, overfalling eyebrows; but to me — to me it was the face of an angel!

I stood transfixed, doubting the evidence of my eyes. Then, with a sob of joy, I advanced slowly with arms upraised. The old man vanished, but a moment later I saw him creeping across the shelf over which the torrent flung itself.

"Stop!" I cried. "Don't leave me! My God, don't leave me!" He made no answer, nor even glanced back.

"Stop!" I shrieked again, in a frenzy of rage and cheated hope. "Stop — or I'll murder you!"

I raised the revolver, but dropped it with a cry of horror. The man had leaped for an overhanging bush, had slipped on the wet rocks and fallen from the shelf, clutching at the air. His body struck a projection midway of the cliff, and bounded to the rocky bed of the stream.

I floundered into the torrent, opposing the strength of desperation to the rushing waters. They swept the body to my eager arms, and on hands and knees I dragged it, treasure trove, to the opposite bank. The old man's eyes were closed, and a crimson stream trickled from a cut over one temple. I looked upon him in fierce pity and blind resentment.

"Unhappy wretch!" I cried, "could you not let me die without this added torment? Have I found a human being in this hell of solitude only to lose him?"

Then my mood changed. I flung myself down beside the man, and in babbling phrases besought him to live — to live, if but for an hour. Weak, worn, and selfish, I thought only of my own hapless condition.

The gray, sunken orbs unclosed. There was reproach, but not malice in them. "To my cabin — yonder," he whispered, indicating with his eyes the direction he could not lift his hand to point.

Through the dripping bushes I half dragged, half carried him, up a steep and winding trail that led to his dwelling. I laid him

upon his bunk, washed the blood from his face, replaced his wet garments with dry ones that hung from a peg, and poured down his throat liquor found in a locker. He revived, and thanked me with his melancholy gray eyes, in which wonder and pity were mingled.

"You are exhausted," he said. "There is food in the locker." The reminder was timely. In another minute I should have sunk to the floor. A draught of the liquor put life in my veins, and I ate ravenously of the food. Then I kindled a fire, and as I stood drying my dripping extremities before the crackling blaze, I surveyed my surroundings.

The cabin was a rude affair, built of mammoth logs chinked with clay and moss. The flat roof was fashioned of long splints of spruce, with heavier strips of the same for the floor. There was but the one room, spacious, cobwebbed, and smoke-grimed, with a large, irregular window consisting of a single sheet of glass set into the clay plastering, and a huge fireplace and chimney of rough rock. I noted the single bunk, a table and two stools, the pelt of a black bear stretched before the hearth, and above it an immense pair of antlers, from which depended a rifle and rod. I was not a little surprised to see in this lodge of the wilderness a shelf of books of uncommon size and appearance and a quantity of maps and charts, besides a very large map of the world, which covered the larger part of one wall. But there were still other objects in the cabin that excited more than passing wonder.

In one corner stood a wooden, sink-shaped frame, fitted with drivewheel, belt, and treadle. Later I knew that it was a grinding and polishing machine. In the center of the box, which was sprinkled with dust and powder, was a horizontal disc; standing along the wall, underneath were other discs of varying sizes, the largest about four feet in diameter, while on a neighboring shelf were lenses in various stages of completion, together with irregular-shaped chunks of glass.

A movement from the bunk drew my attention back to the owner of the cabin. He had raised himself upon his elbow, and was signing for me to draw near.

"You will live?" I said, half appealingly, as I pushed a stool to his side and took, not without a qualm, his cold, claw-like hand.

Since we had reached the cabin I had given no thought to the nature or extent of the injuries he had sustained by his fearful fall.

"I will live — for an hour; perhaps less, perhaps more," he replied. "And in that time I must give to you the result of a life-time of dreaming, of hope, and of accomplishment. Do not seek to interrupt me; there is no time for that."

You must not suppose that these words or the story which succeeded were uttered in the unbroken strain of my repetition. There were frequent intervals, short and long, during which he gasped, choked, or clutched at his breast, as if the recital caused him intense agony. These were the tragic details which served to stamp his words indelibly upon the tablets of my memory,—details which I cannot, do not, desire to recall. I repeat the story as I remember it; for its brevity my own folly is responsible.

"Ten years ago," said he, "I ostracized myself from my kind, and came to this wilderness to work out the dream of my life. It is accomplished. At last I have perfected an invention of incalculable value. By its means a man, standing at any spot, may see half way around the globe, in any direction. By its means one eye can watch the movements of the world's millions. I do not expect you to believe me without the proof. Your own eyes shall attest the truth of my words.

"For twenty years I have experimented with the forces of nature, my chief studies being in optics and electricity. Like nearly everybody else who has dabbled in the former science, I early tried my hand at the manufacture of high-power lenses, and encountered the usual obstacles to going beyond certain limits, which limits are represented by the most powerful microscopes and telescopes now in use.

"I knew that glass was not an absolute non-conductor of electricity, and one day I discovered that, when subjected to a powerful continuous current, it undergoes, under favorable conditions, certain molecular changes, which annul its chromatic properties. You can better realize the importance of this discovery when I tell you that it is chiefly on account of the chromatic properties of glass that lenses of vastly greater power than those now known to science have been impossible. I was now in possession of a fact

which would enable me to make lenses hundreds of times more powerful than had ever been dreamed of.

"Here in this wilderness, where no man's foot save mine had been since, perhaps, the days of the savage, I built this cabin, and here I lived and wrought. First, I made a microscope, fitting it with a high-grade electrical lens, and I can best give you an idea of the power of the instrument when I tell you that with it I have been enabled to study the ultimate atomic structure of matter. Startling revelations as to the nature and properties of both atoms and molecules, with all the other details of my life work and discoveries, may be found in papers of which I will later tell you.

"Then I built my masterpiece, my telescope. I spent years in grinding and polishing the lenses. The objective is so arranged that when it is in use 150,000 volts of electricity pass through it continuously. I shall not attempt to tell you what I have seen in the heavens; my published observations will upset half the guesses of modern astronomy. There is a more practical, financial value attached to my discovery.

"Within half an hour I can tell you how many ships are plowing the waters of the Mediterranean, the English Channel, or what you will. I can locate the precise position of any army or fleet in Europe. You see the possibilities of the thing are stupendous, enormous. What nation but would give millions for the possession of such a potent instrument for war or peace!"

The man's eyes glowed with the fire of enthusiasm; and I, who had been sitting spellbound,— I at this point smiled, as you are smiling now. I was no scientist, but I could doubt and scoff with the best of them.

The old scientist saw my smile, and a trace of irritation rested for an instant upon his face.

"That is my story," said he. "And now for the proofs. Come, a draught of the liquor, and then your arm. I shall live for hours yet. You shall see! You shall see!"

With a flash of strength, generated by a powerful excitement, he dragged me out and around the cabin, where a narrow footpath led up the hill through the forest. Here he collapsed, and, as he was no great burden, I took him upon my back. The rain had ceased, and the sun broke through the clouds.

At the top of the slope we came out into a species of basin. For a radius of two hundred feet or more the trees had been felled, but only in part removed, and around this chaos of fallen and decaying timber the untouched forest rose, tier upon tier. A strange, wild scene it was, and the strangest object in it was an enormous telescope of wood, mounted upon a pier formed by two stumps, across which a heavy beam had been fixed. The tube was poised on a huge wooden pin at the center of this crossbeam, and around the pier a deep space had been cleared. Between the supporting stumps stood an old leather-covered chest, from which issued wires that connected with, and ran along the sides of, the telescope, first passing through what I took to be a switchboard, such as I had seen in telegraph or telephone offices. This was fastened to the crosspiece, and although I examined the entire apparatus more closely the next day, I cannot describe it to you more intelligibly. I was and am densely ignorant in such matters. An unmechanical mind is helpless before machinery of the least complexity.

While my wondering eye made note of these things my companion had crawled into the pit. He directed me to remove the oiled canvas that protected the object-glass of the telescope, and then swung the vast tube skyward. A few rapid touches at the keys on the switchboard and of adjustment of the tube, and with one hand still controlling the wires, he stepped back with an eager "Look!"

In astonishment I glanced from him to the sky, toward which the instrument still pointed. There was naught there but a few fleecy clouds.

"Look!" he repeated impatiently, and I placed myself at the eyepiece.

I looked upon the sea, blue as the heaven above me. White sails dotted its surface, and the shore line was broken by cliffs and a glimpse of a village. As I gazed, wonder bound, the picture grew in distinctness, and I made out, not only dwellings, but the forms of men and women. Startled, I sprang back, and glanced up and around me, and encountered the triumphant, half-scornful smile of my companion.

"There are no pictures, no photographs," he said, reading my thoughts. "You have just seen the Mediterranean."

I could not well contradict him; I had never looked upon it before. But all my pent-up doubts and objections welled forth in one explosive inquiry:—

"The curvature of the earth?" -

"Is obviated by my cloud-mirrors," he replied calmly. "Thus do I deflect the rays of light. It is all explained and worked out in my papers. There is nothing left to chance. Now for a glimpse of the Hawaiian Islands."

He swung the telescope swiftly round, elevating it a trifle more in the adjustment. Again I clapped my eye to the tube, and again the picture grew until every object in the field of vision stood out in cameo-like relief. An exclamation escaped my lips. I descried a palace with spacious grounds; but it was not merely a picture, it was a scene of action. Men were fighting for their lives. Puffs of white spoke of volleys of musketry. I caught myself listening for the reports.\* Bewildered beyond expression, I turned to my companion.

"Show me London!" I cried. "That I know, and in that I cannot be deceived."

A spasm contorted his face. He reeled, and would have fallen had I not caught him. He pushed me away and turned to the telescope.

"Doubter!" he muttered hoarsely. "Doubt no longer!"

I waited in brutal impatience while, in manifest suffering, he made the necessary adjustments, and eagerly sought the tube. One glance, and every shadow of incredulity vanished. For I saw as plainly as I see the words I write, the Houses of Parliament, the Tower, the bridge, the river, and a score more of objects as familiar to me as the streets of New York. It was London beyond question.

Don't remind me of what I told myself a hundred times before that moment. Never was there man more practical, less given to dreaming than myself. But I looked, I saw, and I was convinced.

Suddenly the picture vanished, and I turned questioningly to

At the time I looked through the telescope I had no conception of the nature of the disturbance on the Pacific isle, nor did I give more than a passing thought to it. I afterward ascertained that what I saw was the uprising headed by Messrs. Wilcox and Boyd, which culminated in the struggle in the palace grounds at Honolulu on the thirtieth of July, 1889. Tidings of this event were not published in the press of this country until a week or more after its occurrence. my companion. His hand was no longer at the switchboard; he had fallen on his face. I caught him up and staggered back to the cabin. As I laid him upon his bunk he tried to speak, but a hemorrhage prevented. His injuries, whatever they might be, were internal.

In sudden dismay I reflected upon what his death meant. "Man, man, you must not die!" I burst out. "This discovery must not be lost to the world. I will summon assistance! You shall live! You shall live!"

"Fool!" I heard him gasp as I ran out of the cabin and down the winding trail. And "Fool!" I echoed as I stood on the bank of the river and looked about me helplessly. I hurried back to the cabin.

The old man was dead. I was again alone in the wilderness.

The next morning I gave him such sepulture as was possible in the primeval wild. Though it mattered little what spot was set apart in that vast tomb, I buried him where, I thought, he could have wished to sleep—beneath the monument his genius had wrought. Above his rude grave the big tube still pointed skyward, and the subtle forces that operated it still coursed through the connecting wires; but the cunning hand that controlled those forces was cold in death. A scientist might have read the secret after an hour's study; to me it was the profoundest of mysteries. I replaced the protecting cover of oiled canvas, and so left it, with a long backward look.

The remainder of the day I passed in preparing for a return to the world. In what part of the Maine wilderness I was, I had of course no means of guessing. I had forgotten, had delayed until too late, to ascertain that important fact from the only source of information open to me. There was not a scrap of paper, nothing on the various charts and maps upon the walls of the cabin, that might cast light upon my position. As for the papers containing the details of the dead scientist's marvelous works, I gave to them no thought whatever. My all-absorbing idea was to get back to civilization.

Though still utterly at sea as to my exact location on the face of the earth, I was now well equipped for a voyage of discovery, as canoe, compass, rifle, lines and hooks, food and liquor, were at

my command. I reasoned that if I journeyed doggedly toward the south, availing myself of lake and stream only when these trended southerly, and blazing a trail as closely as a natural haste admitted of, I should not only reach the confines of civilization, but be able to go back at my leisure over the path I had made.

So the next morning, at the first sign of daylight, I started. Half a mile or more down the river the rips gave place to deep water, and here I embarked. The stream still ran so swiftly that a paddle was needed only for purposes of steering, and after a time I noted with surprise that it was nothing else than an inclined liquid plane, down which I shot with a rapidity that was exhilarating, but productive of not a little uneasiness. For a mile or two there was no break in the parallel walls of forest, but in time these gave way to precipitous banks of rock which rose gradually to a height of some thirty feet. I noted now with genuine alarm that the cañon was contracting at its crests and the watery plane becoming steeper; that I was being swept along, without power to check myself, into a veritable tunnel. While I was watching the vanishing patch of sky, a peculiar roaring noise drew my eyes back to the stream. I had a glimpse of a towering wall of rock, a cavern around which the water was dashed into foam, then the blackness of night, and I fell senseless upon the floor of the canoe.

When I came to myself the murmur of running water was still in my ears, but the canoe was stationary, entangled in a network of alders, through which the blessed light of heaven struggled. My subterranean voyage could not have been of great length, as the sun was not yet over the trees. Wondering what fresh surprises fate had in store, I cut a passage for the canoe through the alders, and pushed out upon the bosom of a lake.

It was not a large body of water, and had, in fact, the appearance of newly flowed land, being wooded to the water's edge and without sign of beach. The forest rose gently to low-lying hills, but not a peak of significance broke the sky line. On all sides the irregular shore presented the same picture as above the hidden inlet whence I had emerged.

Scanning this spot for some sort of a landmark, my eyes rested upon a giant white pine, dismantled by the lightning, which lifted

its gaunt, shattered form above its brethren into the rosy field of the coming day. Near the top the trunk had been split vertically and transversely by the freakish bolt, so that the fissures presented the appearance of an almost perfect cross. As I looked, the sun rose directly behind this pine, and the fissures became a cross of living fire!

I explored the lake, paddling slowly around the shore and searching carefully for an outlet. Finding none, I decided that, like the inlet, it must be subterranean.

A fortnight later, after incredible exertions, I reached the north bay of Moosehead Lake.

Away up near the headwaters of the Penobscot I have a cabin, and for seven years my home has been the Maine woods. Upon one wall of that cabin hangs a vast map of Maine. It is ruled off into squares, each representing a mile of the State's surface. Across the forty-sixth parallel, from Canada on the west to the eastern boundary of Piscataquis County, and thence northerly, is drawn a heavy black line, and within the territory thus set off two hundred or more squares have been checked as one would check an invoice.

Seven years I have devoted to a quest that to others would seem madness. In company with an Indian guide, who knows those woods as a child knows its mother, I have tramped hundreds of miles, moving from square to square on my map as a pawn on the chessboard. I have explored thoroughly the Chesuncook and Chamberlain Lake country, and next spring I shall range the territory between the Allaguash and the St. John. Seven times have the snows of winter sent me back to my cabin, but each spring finds my spirit keener than before, even though my bodily strength wanes.

It is not likely, and yet it may be, that what I seek lies without the boundaries I have drawn. In spite of my efforts to keep a straight course to the south, my path out of the wilderness must have been at best a winding one. During a shower, a drop of water lodged in my compass and seriously disturbed the needle.

But I have twice crossed that trail, verifying it by my handiwork upon the trees and by certain landmarks, so that it is not altogether in despair of eventual success that I reveal a secret that for seven years I have kept, even from the companion of my quest. But now I am a wreck of my former rugged self, and each year finds me less fitted to withstand the perils and hard-ships that attend upon my search.

I record these facts, that, should disaster overtake me, the secret may not perish with me; that some man more fortunate than I may find the square which holds that lost lake of the northern wilds, where at sunrise a cross of fire blazes above the gateway to millions.



#### The Scent of Jasmine.

BY LIVINGSTONE B. MORSE.



HAT odors and music possess, of all appeals to the senses, the greatest power of evoking the past is, I believe, conceded by both poets and physiologists. It is in explaining this fact that the split comes; the poet — and indeed many every-day people — declaring that because they

are the least material in their effect, fragrance and melody are most potent over things of the spirit; the physiologist contending that they simply have peculiar power to excite the brain to reproduce former processes.

Up to a certain point either theory seems plausible. That there is a point beyond, where the ways fork, I think the following narrative sufficient testimony.

Some years ago I spent a summer in a border castle. Not the border made famous by Scott, but the lesser known, though to-day even more romantic boundary between France and Spain, the one-time haunt of the troubadours, where modernity and the middle ages meet.

Of this strange mixture of old and new, of French and Spanish, of the real and the legendary, the Chateau de l'Astiya, — literally the Castle of the Witch, — at which I was a visitor, was uniquely typical. In architecture a medley of Gothic, Moorish, and seventeenth century French, the dark chateau, perched on a jutting crag high over the brawling Tech, looked forbidding as any ancient fortress. But a modern rug covered the stone flagging of the dark entrance hall; the sparkle of glass, and silver, and Dresden china added an anachronism to the monster dining table in the tapestry-hung banquet hall; and the latest magazines and art studies brought a note of Paris, and London, and Vienna into those dim, awesome rooms.

Only in the library - in former centuries the house chapel with

its resident priest — the spirit of the past was left undisturbed. Here oaken paneling, and groined Gothic arches, and curiously leaded windows had been changed in no whit from the days when they lent solemnity to the vigils of new-made knights or the hurried mass heard before battle by armored men. From its early estate the room was changed only in one particular. In the niche where once had risen the shining altar was built a grand organ, so close to the southern window that while fingering the keys I could look down the sheer cliff to the Tech, murmuring hoarsely in the depths below, above which the vapor wreaths floated in fantastic shapes. I could even inhale the perfume of the vine that clung about the window - a jasmine vine thick with the starry white blossoms that, above all others, are redolent of romance. And day by day, as I played or dreamed on the organ bench, there seemed to grow up a subtle affinity between my moods and the place, and the sounds, and the odor of jasmine; so that gradually the everyday world of the nineteenth century seemed to recede farther and farther into dreamland, and the world of long ago, mirrored in the ancient chronicles with which the room was lined, to become more and more a potent and living actuality.

It was in this room and beside this window that I first read the legend of Isabella l'Astiya, — Isabella the Witch, — from whom the castle gained its name.

Isabella of Roussilon was the only child of Gerard II., and so renowned through the Province for her beauty and goodness that, in accordance with her father's dearest wish and hope, she was sought in marriage by the King of Aragon. This, too, although the Counts of Roussilon belonged to the unpopular sect of the Albigenses. An unforeseen obstacle, however, was the opposition of Isabella herself. Hitherto always obedient and dutiful, neither by threats, nor urging, nor even appeal to her religious training could she be persuaded to the alliance. Indeed, she seemed encouraged in her resolve by certain pious pilgrimages that she made from time to time, attended only by her old nurse, to some distant shrine whereof the count did not know or ask the location. She would be gone some days, and at length her father noticed that upon her return she would seem more gentle and pensive than ever, but still more firmly unyielding; and little

by little he began to distrust the effects of these pilgrimages, and at last forbade them entirely. Perhaps he enforced his authority by bolts and bars. At any rate, from that day Isabella kept to the castle, making no complaint, but so evidently sickening under the restraint that at last her father was constrained to grant his consent to one final pilgrimage.

With great joy and unusual splendor of preparation she set out, attended as before by her nurse. And that was the last ever seen of the beautiful Isabella. It was not till years had gone by that the old nurse, crippled by age and infirmity, crawled back to the castle and told her story, on hearing which the old count died of grief and shame.

It seems that years before Raymond, Count of Toulouse (afterward the famous Raymond VI.), while traveling through the Province of Roussilon had stopped at the court of Gerard, and seeing Isabella, had loved her and been loved by her. Knowing that Gerard would never consent to the union, Raymond had won her to a secret marriage, and had deceived her with a mock priest.

Raymond returned almost immediately to Toulouse; but they arranged to meet from time to time at his castle in the Pyrenees, upon whose ruins the *Chateau de l'Astiya* was afterwards built, and this was the secret shrine of Isabella's pilgrimages.

Time passed; again and again Isabella urged Raymond to acknowledge the marriage, but he always put her off with some good excuse. The clamor against the Albigenses was increasing. Already, by refusing to take an active part in the persecution, because of his love for Isabella, he had incurred the censure of the church, and at last was obliged to flee to hiding in his castle among the Pyrenees. It was then that he found Isabella, triumphant in having compassed her escape; and maddened, perhaps, at the sacrifices he had made for her, he confessed his deceit. What more passed between them is unknown, but only the next day Raymond was stricken down by an unknown illness which baffled the skill of all the physicians. Through this Isabella nursed him devotedly, but apparently without hope.

He seemed on the point of death, when one day the seneschal of the castle, a Basque whose tribe were famous for their arts of healing, proposed a sure cure for the count — namely, the left

hand of a child cut off during sleep, and wrapped about with its own hair as a powerful amulet. This barbarous plan was about to be carried out when Isabella, shocked at the atrocity, interposed and saved the child, at the same time indignantly ordering the Basque to leave the castle. He did as she commanded, but swore to be revenged for the loss of his position. Collecting a number of the count's credulous retainers in a valley near by, he performed certain mystical rites, announcing finally to the awe-struck beholders that he had discovered the illness of the count to be due to witchcraft, and proclaimed that the sorceress, or Astiya, as it is in the Basque tongue, who had wrought the spell, was no other than Isabella herself.

Isabella had many enemies who were jealous of her influence, and the news speedily came to the ears of the count. Now whether he believed that Isabella had really cast this spell in revenge for the shame he had brought upon her, or whether, having grown weary of her, he made this an excuse for ridding himself of one whose gentle presence must have been a constant reproach to him, the nurse did not know; but at all events, at the dead of night, while Isabella watched at the bedside of her betrayer, two men stole into the room, and bearing the unfortunate girl to the crags without the castle, they hurled her slight form into the darkness of the gorge. One wild grasp she made in falling, and caught at a vine of flowering jasmine that grew upon the edge of the cliff. Its white star blossoms fell all about her in a shower as she fell down into the rushing Tech, and thus, it is said, she strewed her grave with flowers.

The mountaineers, however, affirm that she still haunts the spot where she loved and died. They believe her to have been a witch, indeed, and point to the wreath of mist that rises at night and floats above the stream, saying that it is the spirit of the Astiya, who is forced thus to return as an expiation for her crime.

This legend took a powerful hold upon me. Often, as I reclined beside the window in the library, idly watching the stirring jasmine leaves against the sky, I fell to thinking of the legend, and wondered whether it were possible that, in a spirit of revenge, she could have brought herself to enter into a compact with the powers of Evil; or whether, in perfect innocence, she had been cruelly put to death. Had her love for her false husband survived her knowledge of his deceit? Had she forgiven him? Thoughts of her drifted through my mind so often as I chanced to be in the library; at first vaguely and fitfully, but with ever-increasing distinctness and power, that was specially marked when of a night—the brilliant moonlight night of Southern France—I would sit at the organ in the dusk and play dreamily to myself, softly running from theme to theme as the mood seized me, and letting my thoughts have free rein.

One evening I had been playing as usual, gliding carelessly from one composition to another, — now the full-toned Largo of Handel, now a weird rhapsody of Liszt, when, close beside me, I heard, or thought I heard, a sigh. It might have been the wind, or perhaps it was my fancy; yet so distinct it was, so inexpressibly sad, that I could not shake off the impression of its reality. Only one faint sigh, yet I could not forget it.

A few evenings later I was playing something of St. Saëns; I remember perfectly it was a study in which there occurs a partial ascending scale of E flat. As I reached this passage, and my fingers swept up the scale, I heard close at hand and perfectly distinct, the soft sweeping of light drapery, as though a piece of silk were dragged over the floor, and again the gentle sigh.

I stopped short in my playing and turned about. The moon poured in a flood of light, the air was heavy with the jasmine scent, and, though I could see nothing, I was conscious of some one standing near me. By a sudden impulse I turned back to the organ, and repeated the measure I had just played — E, F, A flat, G, in the scale of E flat, straining my ears meanwhile to their fullest. Again upon the floor I heard the soft sweeping of the silken garment, and the low uttered sigh, continuing while I held the notes. There could be no doubt of it this time — this was no trick of imagination!

Here at least was a discovery. There was undoubtedly a connection between the sounds evoked by my playing and the manifestation of the unseen presence. But what was it? Without having any definite theory to work upon I set myself to discover. I ransacked the library for works on acoustics, and the various properties of sound. I tried all manner of experiments in syn-

chronous vibrations: on plates of glass, on water, and on stretched chords, and these I sought to apply in some way in explanation of the phenomena; but with no success. I felt certain, however, that something was to be revealed to me, something outside the pale of probability; and with interest aroused to the highest pitch, I determined to wait.

I gradually worked out for myself a set of facts or principles in relation to the phenomena. The light must be of a certain brilliancy, the atmosphere perfectly clear; there must be a light breeze from such a quarter that the scent of the jasmines should be wafted directly into the room. Given these conditions, and my mind in a receptive state, I observed that when certain notes were struck upon the organ there would occur the sighs, the sound of sweeping drapery, and I would be conscious of a near-by presence. At such times my faculties were wrought to a high pitch of excitement; the room seemed charged with electricity.

Night after night I sat at the organ waiting for some further revelation. As the moon drew toward the full, and the jasmine vine put forth its most abundant bloom so that the air was very heavy with the scent, I observed that the manifestations became more and more frequent. On two or three occasions I even fancied that a shadowy form hovered for a single instant in the moonlight near the window. Or was it only the mist floating up from the stream below wrought by my excited fancy into the semblance of a figure? It was there but an instant, then gone; and try as I would, by playing the same strain over and over, I could not recall it. The moon was on the wane, and the jasmine was beginning to fade, - half of the blossoms were gone already. I was conscious, I know not why, that it would soon be too late. The sadness was growing upon me. Once in the midst of a nocturne of Chopin's I heard a low wail at my side - so pitiful that the tears started to my eyes. What was this awful sorrow, so near, yet so entirely beyond the reach of my help?

One night, near the end of June, I sat leaning far out of the Gothic window, gazing down into the cavern below; inky black, save where the vapor that rose above the stream floated in white fantastic shapes that drifted, and wreathed, and changed and vanished — slowly — endlessly. The moonlight fell broadly in a

great shaft of light upon the floor of the library. With every puff of the soft air the heavy scent of the jasmines was wafted into the room.

Suddenly the breeze freshened, chilly; at that instant came to me, like a command, an irresistible impulse to play. I rushed to the organ and, throwing wide the stops, began without hesitation the grand Fifth Symphony of Beethoven.

I played as one inspired. Swept on by the current of my mood, I thought of nothing but the perfect harmony in nature, in the music, and in myself.

I finished the andante, and reached those wonderful transition chords that precede the repetition of the theme. As I struck the chords, something akin to paralysis held my fingers. At the same moment I beheld, poised in the great flood of moonlight that poured into the room, shadowy, yet perfectly clear in outline, the figure of a woman. The face was marvelously beautiful, the hands stretched out as though in supplication, the hair flowing, the drapery a cloud of silver mist.

While I looked, faintly, as from afar off, borne to my ears upon the heavy jasmine-scented air, came these words: "Raymond, toi que j'aime, Raymond!" the voice, low and tender, though heartbreaking in its sadness, dying in a faint sigh: "Raymond, thou whom I love, Raymond!"

That was all — just while I held the chords; then it melted away into the moonlight, as the mist below on the river fades and vanishes.

I sprang up and leaned far out of the window. There was no one to be seen. The jasmine vine was quite bare of blossoms, the breeze had swept off the last of them, and like a shower of white stars they were gently floating down into the misty chasm below. The presence, whatever it was, had disappeared; and though many times since I have touched the same chords at night by moonlight, it has never shown itself to me again.

But I believe — whatever the physiologists may say — that it was because place, and hour, and mood, and music all combined to put me for a single instant in harmony with the unseen world that I was permitted to see the spirit of poor "l'Astiya"; and that at last, after centuries of silence, she had been permitted to assert her innocence.

## The Black Cat \$4,000.00 Prize Story Competition.

So great was the interest manifested in The Black Cat prize story competition which closed March 31, that the work of reading and passing upon the thousands of manuscripts submitted consumed over two months. Contributions were received from every part of the globe. In arriving at the following result the invariable rule of The Black Cat to judge stories solely upon their own merits, without regard to the name or reputation of writers, was in every case strictly observed.

These are the

### Successful Competitors.

	i st Prize, \$	31,500.	The Tax on Moustaches. H. J. W. Dam, Abbey Road, London, England.
	2d Prize, \$	1,000.	(Divided, each contributor receiving \$500.)  The Glen Echo Mystery.  Walter Wellman, Washington, D. C.  The White Brick.  Frank E. Chase, Boston, Mass.
	3d Prize,	\$500.	(Divided, each contributor receiving \$250.)  The Pillow of Justice.  E. S. Innet, New York, N. Y.  The Diary of a White Kaffir.  James O. Fagan, Waltham, Mass.
1	4th Prize,	\$350.	The Statement of Jared Johnson. Geraldine Bonner, New York, N. Y.
	5th Prize,	\$250.	(Divided, each contributor receiving \$125.)  On Pigeon River.  Jeanie Drake, Charleston, S. C.  The Lost Jurisdiction.  Ellis Meredith, Denver, Col.
	6th Prize,	\$200.	(Divided, each contributor receiving \$100.)  Mrs. Thompson's Account of It.  Emily Hewitt Leland, Knoxville, Tenn.  The Haunted Cap.  George W. Kelley, Rockland, Mass.
	7th Prize,	\$100.	A Daughter of the Sun. Samuel Scoville, Jr., New York, N. Y.
	8th Prize,	\$100.	On the Edge of Things. G. K. Turner, Springfield, Mass.

The above awards, amounting to \$4,000.00, were paid, May 24, 1898, by certified checks which are reproduced on the following pages.

In addition to the foregoing prize stories, a number of excellent tales have been retained for purchase. The unavailable manuscripts have been returned to their authors with a copy of this announcement.

The Shortstory Publishing Co.

#### "Color of Heaven." \*

#### BY MARGARET DODGE.



of our effects and our own departure from the empty shell of what had been a home. Little more than a three months' camping-place that dingy half-house in a suburban limbo had seemed to us two young people, busied by day in the

near-by city. But the mind reaches out unconscious tendrils to material supports. Ten minutes with blank floors and walls put us so nearly into the mood of castaways that we fled to the doorsteps to watch an unsuccessful sunset and grasp at the first subject that presented itself for conversation. This chanced to be the color of great cities. It was a fact, so my brother said, that, seen from a sufficient height, each showed its own individual tint.

"Like the years of one's life," commented a voice from the other side of the slender railing that divided our scrap of yard and doorsteps from those of the other tenant. Evening after evening that frail little elderly man had sat out watching sunsets, separated from us only by a line hardly more substantial than the equator. But never before had he acknowledged our presence save by such a courteous bow as the holder of season ticket 77, at the opera, might bestow upon number 76.

Now he continued as though taking up the thread of a nightly conversation: —

"But perhaps I am alone in that idea. I forget, when I express myself in terms of color, that all are not, as Miss Flite would say, 'a little M, my dears,' on that subject."

A certain melancholy humor in the quotation from Dickens's most lovable eccentric, an appeal like that of a lonely child in his pale, widely set eyes, drew me to cry out:—

"What a pity we had not known it before! We, too, are scientists." And then I stopped short, blushing at the thought of

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how recently the ink had dried on our diplomas from the city's famous technical school.

But with perfect gravity our neighbor responded : -

"Yes, I have heard you here evenings talking of your ambitions. A dozen times I have been on the verge of speech. Ah, well—the fear with which the young may inspire the old! Now there remains only the hour that travelers, well met, spend together in a railway station before two trains bear them in opposite directions. But will you not give that time to a visit to my workshop? There is apparatus that might be worth your while."

It did, quite literally, lack about an hour of our train time, — an hour that my brother signified we would gladly give to this belated neighboring.

Outside his door the little man paused for a look back at the western sky. Already the faint pencilings of rosy light had faded; stars, a whole skyful, pierced the muffling gloom of the suburban night.

"The night has a thousand eyes,"

quoted Ralph, half under his breath,

"And the day but one, But the light of the whole day dies With the setting sun."

It was our host who finished the verse, with the inflection of one who speaks his own thought, not merely repeats another's.

"Yes, that was a true word Bourdillon gave us. But the last verse, what do you make of that?

> "The mind has a thousand eyes, And the heart but one, But the light of a whole life dies When love is done."

- "What do I make of that?" Ralph stammered, "why—a—beautiful figure of speech."
- "'Figure of speech'!" The voice vibrated between scorn and tenderness. "Ah, youth, youth! Theories, all theories!
- "But, pardon me"—throwing open the door—"you came not to listen to elderly monologues, but to see my workshop."

Did you ever on a ramble afield crack open a rough, dingy stone and find yourself dazzled with its lining of rainbow-flashing crystals? It was with just such a breathless wonder that we stood in the entrance of our neighbor's workroom. Without the house, like ours, had presented a bleak, drab, unlovely wall. But here was color everywhere—a splendor of varied color, flashing from prism-hung chandeliers, gleaming from glass cubes and globes and multi-angled crystals, shimmering from heaps of spun glass, glancing from wondrously woven iridescent silken scarves, glinting from racks of jewel-tinted porcelain, playing over a wall surface that glistened with what seemed a mineral hoar-frost.

And not merely color was here, but every device for the mingling, reflection, and intensifying of hues: a revolving disk, painted with the seven rainbow tints and presenting, when in motion, only a blur of grayish white; retorts of liquid on which floated bubble-bright films; a burner in whose flame a piece of metal wire sputtered blue and gold. Besides, there were huddled upon floor, chairs, tables, sills, instruments whose use we could only guess; bottles of unknown chemicals, scientific works in English, French, German, all relating to Optics and Spectrum Analysis. In fine, for three months we had been living almost in the same house with a scientist whose laboratory betokened an awe-inspiring degree of specialization.

The wonder of it all, together with a vain regret for a lost opportunity, must have spoken in our eyes, for our host, pushing forward two unoccupied chairs, bowed deprecatingly.

"Yes," he said, leaning back against his workbench, "it is as you see; my apparatus is as nearly complete as may be in an incomplete world. Color — color — that is my fixed idea. Even as a child I could distinguish tints as a violinist can musical notes. An extra fineness of eye corresponding to the musician's 'ear,' my professors told me when I entered college. Limited they were, very limited, those men; but they helped me to the best of their ability to analyze color — its cause, production, elements — technique as complicated as that by which the tone masters acquire the theory of their art.

"And just as the real musician's thoughts translate themselves into terms of music, to me life came to express itself in terms of the prism. There were the rosy years of childhood; there were student years golden through good companionship and unbounded

ambitions; there were the sober, plodding, working years all quiet greens and blues.

"And my goal?" The man's figure appeared to settle into itself. Upon his face fell the brooding, absent gaze of those who live much in the past. Even his voice seemed to recede into years gone by as he continued:—

"You know, of course, that color, like sound, is the result of air waves or vibrations, the red at one end of the prism representing the slowest vibrations, the violet, at the other end, the quickest. You know, too, I presume, that, beyond the violet, analysis has discovered the existence of waves vibrating too rapidly to be seen — in other words, an eighth color.

"It was to discern that color"—the voice droned on monotonously as that of a child reciting "by heart"—"it was to see that shade beyond the violet that I put out of my plans all the pleasures and amusements supposed to belong to youth. I had money—a plenty. I was alone in the world—independent I called it. I was willing—there spoke youth—to give my life to research."

A nervous white hand fluttered over his heart. For a moment I feared collapse, but presently he produced from his pocket a faded leather case, which he wiped carefully with a white silk handkerchief.

"I forgot," he continued simply, "that our lives are not ours to give. Have I said there was one tint lacking in the prism of my life? But four years after college it came, too. You know what poets call it," apologetically, "the purple light of love."

He laid the case gently in my fingers. Was it the glinting uncertainty of light on the old daguerreotype that gave to the girl face a look almost fatefully sweet — something beyond beauty?

"When I first saw her," he continued, "she stood in a farmyard blowing soap-bubbles for a child. One frail globe swayed above her—a miniature world in which sky and trees and grass shone all glorified. It was like that with her mind; in it the commonest things gained a beauty not their own.

"When two minds blend at a look there is no need to wait for the hour-glass. In two months we were married, and moved into this house, then far out of the world. There was no interruption in my work; she would not have that; — but somehow she made it all seem like play. What no other woman could have done she did: — mastered the elements of my science, learned my methods, fitted herself to be my assistant in every detail. And even in our resting hours she had always a word for the rainbows that flashed from the film on still pools, or glittered winter mornings from frosted panes, or gleamed from wet sands at sunset, or shone from the pale corona of the storm-boding moon. Everywhere she saw the bow of promise. It was like living in the heart of a prism.

"Have I said that she named the hue beyond the violet? Color of heaven,' she said it would be.

"Four years passed like that, but with no result, at least none in the line of my search. Others — my classmates — gifted in no especial wise, were building reputations. Gradually there grew upon me the daily pettiness of those who excuse small meanness with the thought of great goals. I became a miser of hours, grudging those that went to recreation, adding daily to the periods in my laboratory.

"She made no comment, but presently I saw that the dust gathered on her piano and favorite poets, and that the time given once to them she spent in her corner of my workshop — 'at private research,' she would say, with her girl smile. But in her eyes was a look that awed me. Once before I had seen it, or thought I had seen it, on the face of a man who soon after remade science by knowledge dragged from the borderland of the unknown. The look of destiny I called it; I suppose men are prone to think those things predestined that work toward their ends.

"One day — it was ten years after my graduation — a need for fresh material took me to the city, where I spent the night. As I drove back in the early morning along the country roads, something — a radiant clearness in the air, a lustrous bloom on the grass and flowers, a caressing softness in the wind — seemed prophetic of success.

"With this presage on me I went straight to my laboratory. From within sounded the voice of my wife singing ever so softly—as another woman might sing over a cradle. Before I could push open the door the song broke off and I heard her voice, sweet as it had never before sounded to me.

"'Color of heaven! Arthur, dearest, I have found it for you."

The fluttering hand covered the pale brown eyes for a moment. We looked away, abashed, as is the habit of the young before any display of emotion from the old.

"Yes," he continued presently, "it was color of heaven that she saw. On her face, when I turned it to mine, was the look of one who has seen what none can see — and live."

Mechanically he took the picture, and, wiping it once more, returned it to its place.

"That was twenty years ago," he added. "In the crucible on her workbench I found nothing — not so much as a film of ashes to tell me whether she drew poison from some chemical or whether she had simply — had simply pressed too near the borderland of the unknown to return again.

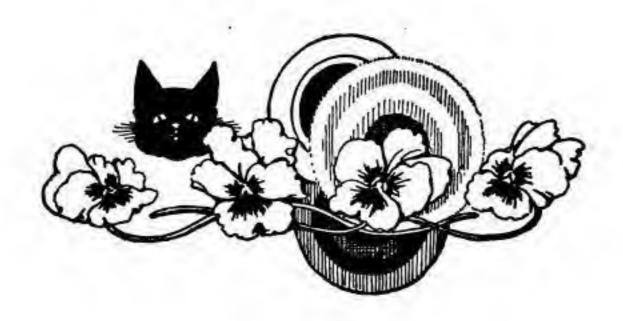
"But since then it is as the song says, the light of the world is dead — dead. Literally, the green has gone from the grass and the blue from the sky.

"Still I work on, every day, every day. And sometime I, too, shall see it—the color beyond the violet, the color of heaven—and be with her."

From the brooding mood that followed he roused to accept our shy farewells.

As we hurried down, under the stars, to the railroad station we could hear quavering through the open window: —

"But the light of a whole life, The light of a whole life dies When love is done."



# the Black Cat

#### A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 42.

#### MARCH, 1899.

5 cents a copy.

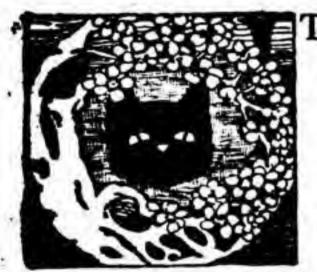
Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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#### Underwater House.\*

BY FRANK BAILEY MILLARD.



I shall be built of glass, dearest, and it shall be at the bottom of a lake. There shall be rows of taku plants all around it, with their beautiful submarine flowers, and we shall have palms and orchids inside it. There is nothing these black men may not do under my direction. What a

cool retreat it will be for us in those hot days of the tropical

Thus wrote Frederic Vining, under a cocoa tree on an island in the South Pacific, to his sweetheart, Marcia Tait, in Boston. And, having promised, he set to work.

To you and to the world Frederic Vining would have been only a cold man of science. An impassive countenance, eyes of that Norse gray in which there is the least of fire and the greatest of penetration, together with what they had called at Harvard "Vining's infernal uppishness," made him a man to be reckoned with at arm's length. And yet no undergraduate in his class had warmed up to his Faraday or his Darwin as Vining had done, and no one

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burnt as much oil over induction theories or tinkered more tenaciously with the electroscope. Socially, too, no one of the college was less beset by genteel timidities. Freed from college, he had climbed fast. He had bagged big game in three or four scientific fields, but at last had left all else and gone from settled choice into the broad and tempting domain of electricity, with all its ambition-inviting lures. His widowed mother, on whose fingers blazed gems that alone would have placed her high in plutocratic society, gladly gave him money for all his experiments, and the sight of his laboratory made the heart of many a struggling inventor to ache with envy. The mother died and her son built a costly monument over her grave and went to Europe. There his friends of the alumni lost trace of him for a year or two, and then they heard that he had loaded a ship with all manner of electrical materials and had sailed to the South Pacific, where, on some anonymous volcanic island, he intended to pursue his studies outside the leash and beyond the whip of civilization. His friends were not surprised, but they were curious: Still, as none of them knew where to write to him, he was not worried by their ques-But once every three months (the trading schooner touched no oftener) a letter came to Vining. It was addressed in that very large and angular handwriting which many young women affect because many other young women affect it. When Vining received one of these letters there came over his face something that was almost a smile, and once he was observed by one of his helpers — a white man — to raise the envelope to his lips. The sight of that wild demonstration caused the helper so much astonishment and perturbation that he dropped a costly glass disk to the floor and broke it into eighteen small pieces.

The kissing of the envelope was in the days before the Mary Ellen had put into Port Vining and before her crew had told those much befringed tales of wealth to be had at the pearl islands to the north. In the evening of the day that the Mary Ellen sailed Vining had called his man Toli to summon a white assistant to his cabin and had then learned that the men he had brought to the island of Kau had all sailed away on the schooner. Toli had thought that his master would be very angry, and when he had told him of the desertion he ran into the thicket. Peering from

the brush he saw Vining look away toward the north for a moment and then light a cigar.

Soon after that an ugly look came upon the face of the savage, for Malia, the most beautiful young woman of the island and shapely as fair women are in dreams, approached Vining shyly and touched his arm. Toli saw Vining smile upon the girl and soon she was sitting beside him and they talked softly as the shadows deepened. Then Toli went away. All he said was, "Wait!"

Next day Vining went over to the place where the Kauans, under their black overseer, were laying the foundations of the "glass palace," as the proud savant called it, and truly it promised to be of palatial dimensions. It was situated in a great punch-bowl of a valley, a mile wide, into which Vining purposed to turn a river and thus make a lake. The blacks lazed at their work, but, as there were many of them, and they had been well trained, there was not much of false motion, and the palace grew under their hands.

In the months that followed, Vining kept the work well under his eye, and when the last great plate of glass, the making of which had so mystified the people of Kau, was in its place and firmly cemented, the flood-gate was opened and the water began slowly to rise about the crystal walls.

A few months later Frederic Vining wrote to Marcia Tait:

"The water is fathoms deep over the roof and the takus are growing about the windows of Underwater House. You have no idea how clever these natives are at diving and working under water. They have stopped every leak and planted the takus everywhere about the house. These takus are wonderfully tough plants, like ropes, and they grow long, with occasional large flowers that are beautifully colored.

"You said in your last letter that you would come in December. Better put it off till April, for you must remember that your winter is our summer, and you should not begin here in the hottest weather, but in the coolest, so that your acclimation will be the easier."

Malia was at his elbow while he wrote, her black eyes shooting love straight at him, and Toli, from a little distance, was blacker of brow and muttering more deeply than ever.

But it was not Malia's love that caused the writing of this letter of postponement. Vining had but played with the soft little maid of the south. She had filled some of his leisure hours when he was book-tired or tobacco-tired, and he knew nothing of Toli's volcanic jealousy. The real trouble lay deeper. There had been vague grumblings down Tonga way. The islands to the south had threatened war upon the people of Kau. Vining did not know that Toli was a Tongan who, in his youth, had been enslaved by the blacks of Kau. As a matter of fact, Toli had been in secret communication with his people for months and stood ready to betray Vining and deliver him into the hands of the southern savages, who were stronger and more warlike than the Kauans.

When the letter was signed and sealed, Malia, who had known better than to speak while Vining's pen was busy, purred softly to the man she loved, and brought him breadfruit from a near-by tree, serving it daintily upon a large leaf.

"The days pass," she said, "and the moons come and go, but the great one stays and loves me. He will never go."

"No," said the great one, with a new sense of the smallness of the part he was playing in trifling with this steadfast love, and his thought running upon the tender terms of his letter and of Malia's utter ignorance of them and of many things. "No, I do not go and I have no wish to go. Now, run with this letter down to the schooner, Malia. It will sail soon. Be fleet."

Malia, grasping the letter, was off down the slope to the beach, like a gull upon the wind, and Vining called Toli, who fawned and grinned and told him again, in answer to his questions, of the weakness of the Tongan warriors, who were small in number and who were women and children and not fit to fight the stalwart Kauans.

But there were older men than Toli on the island of Kau and these urged preparations for strong defense.

"They have guns," said a man whose father had been eaten in a Tongan feast, "twenty, thirty guns, and they can shoot straight."

"I wish you could tell me what kind of guns. Have they repeating rifles, like ours?" asked Vining. "I know not, but I know they can shoot, and they shoot straight."

"Well, we'll have some target practice, this afternoon. You, Nerido, shall be captain. How many men can you muster?"

"Plenty men with spears, but only ten with guns, and the men of Tonga have twenty, thirty."

"Yes, but there are the torpedoes to blow up the war canoes. I will show you how to use them. And there are the little battery and the mortar. We can keep them off."

"We try hard, chief," said Nerido, bowing and going forth to summon his men.

Day after day went by and the waters lay calm about the island and no war canoes hove in sight. As his sense of security grew, Vining took up his experiments again and made good progress.

On a day when the air trembled with heat and there was a mass of heavy reading to do, he lolled on a divan in the glass house under the lake. It was a place of peace there beneath the placid waters. Looking far out into the perfectly transparent depths he saw the takus sway as the fish glided silently past them. Sometimes a gold-red fin would fan the outer surface of the glass close against his face, or a brown nose would be gently flattened against one of the great panes. The fierce sunlight of the upper air was softly screened by the green waters, and to the eyes there was a sense of relief and of rest.

And the calmness, the silence, the serenity of it all!

Vining heard a soft rustle near him. He turned and there was Toli, half in and half out of a darkened nook in the farther partition wall.

"Ah, Toli, bring me that book-rest and then run away and don't bother."

The master's eyes were not turned to Toli's, or he might have seen the glow of hate and the fierce anticipation in them. When the man had left the room Vining settled down on the cushions to read, but the sweet languor that had so often stolen upon him then came over him again and made his eyes wander from the book and out into the still, cool depths of the lake. His day dream was of Marcia and of the time when she should be there by his side. It

was a delightful dream there in the perfect restful quiet of the under-water world.

Harshly upon that quiet now broke the sound of the telephone bell at his elbow. He started and took the receiver from off the hook and said "Hello, Nerido! What's up?"

A buzz of thick excitement came over the wire. Then Nerido got breath to say:

"The warriors of Tonga! They are upon us! While our men were asleep at noon they stole up from the east of the island and are now in the wooded hills to the north by the lake shore and not far from the tunnel gate of the glass palace. Give us the word! What shall we do?"

Vining glanced about. The waters at his side were not more calm than his tone in reply:

"Call your men up! March them to the rocks by the lake shore! The rocks will protect them from the fire of the Tonga people. Lose no time! But be careful. Waste no shots by idle firing. I will be with you soon."

"Wait, chief. Let me see through my glass again."

There was a pause.

- "Do not come out," was Nerido's sharp warning. "They are near the tunnel gate to the glass palace!"
  - " How many men?"
  - "Two twenties and more. They are coming on all the time."
- "Very well, leave some one at the telephone and go forth instantly with your men."
- "I go," quietly replied Nerido, "and I thirst for the blood of the men who ate my father."
- "This is an odious position," mused Vining, looking blankly about. "I would like to have a hand in the skirmish over yonder, but here I am like a fly in a bottle with a tight cork. But let them move away from the tunnel gate and I'll try that new rifle of mine to some purpose. Hello, Somalii!"
  - "Hello, chief!"
- "Tie the big wire to the picture window, set the telescope to point upon the Tongans, and keep it there."
  - " All right, chief."

The "picture window" was what the natives called Vining's

greatest invention. His name for it was the electro-photoscope. By its use any scene that lay under sunlight in the range of a telescope could be mirrored upon a screen at the end of a wire miles away.

Vining now set up his screen in a little dark room off from the apartment where he had been lounging. This screen was merely a large framed ground glass, which he swung neatly into place in the door of the dark room. He ran his telephone transmitter into the black closet, turned on an arc light behind the glass and, shutting the door of the dark room, sat upon a stool.

- "Hello, Somalii!" he called. "Why don't you turn it on?"
- "The thumb-screw is broken, chief."
- "Put in a new one. Hurry!"

In a few minutes a faint image appeared upon the screen before the dark room, and Vining saw, strangely distorted, the features of Somalii, who was bending over the lens of the camera.

"Set up the telescope tripod and swing the glass into place," directed the master.

Over the telephone came grating sounds and a rap or two; then there flashed upon the scene the blurred outlines of the cocoapalms across the lake, more than a mile from Somalii's camera, but not three hundred yards from the spot where Vining sat.

"Get your focus, man! Get your focus!" ordered the master. Slowly the blur cleared away, and then sharply upon the screen were shown the edge of the lake, the woods and half-naked warriors of Tonga in a ragged group, some standing still, some sitting and others moving about. Ten or a dozen of the hostiles were approaching the tunnel gate. They came on warily.

"Let's see," said Vining. "I have five mines there, scattered about. Ah, here's the chart."

He turned toward the glimmering screen a piece of glass on which was traced a map, showing the immediate vicinity of the tunnel gate.

"Now that vanguard of black fellows is right over mine four." His finger hovered above an electric button. Then he jerked it away.

"It would be a pity to blow up those poor beggars," said he.
"I'll lift mine three and surprise them."

The unerring instrument showed the little advance troop to be within fifty feet of mine three. Vining pressed a button. There was a great red flash upon the screen and the attacking party was carried off its feet by the shock and the surprise. There were also signs of consternation among the main body of the warriors. Raising themselves and stumbling affrightedly, the advance guard fled precipitately back to their comrades. But one of them, wholly overcome by his fear, lay for some time where he had fallen before he crawled away on all fours.

Vining heard a tap at the door of the dark room. He opened it and before him stood Malia, trembling and fearsome.

- "What are you doing here?" asked Vining, angered. "You were to come only when I sent for you, Malia, and you disobey me."
- "O chief, do not chide me!" wailed the frightened girl. "I knew you were in danger and I have been waiting about in these rooms of the under-water house to see what I might do for you. What do they tell you over the wires? Are the warriors of Tonga on the island?"
- "Yes," said Vining, in softer tones. "Look here, girl, do you see them?"
- "What wonders! You make their pictures to come over the wire and live before you. You are a great chief, Lataafa. You are a god. But see, here come our people." She pointed to the edge of the screen, where the Kauan band, creeping behind the rocks by the lake side, moved slowly toward the invaders. "They see them; the Tongan warriors see them. Now there will be fighting and blood upon the grass, and—"
- "Hush, child!" said Vining. For the arc light fluttered and the picture wavered and he was all impatience.
- "Now our people are at the last wall of rocks!" she went on, breathing very hard, "and they stop there. The Tongan men are coming up the lake side. They are nearer and nearer, but there is no shooting. Why is there no shooting, Lataafa?"
- "They want our people to fire and then they will try to rush in and win. An old trick, Malia. They have only single-shot muskets. They do not know that our men have repeating rifles. There, our guns are firing upon them; not to much purpose

though, for the distance is too great. Now the Tongans rush in to shoot at short range and make a sweeping victory. That was the trick. Now they begin their fire."

"But see," cried Malia, thrusting her forefinger toward a corner of the screen, "our people's guns are blazing again and again, and they keep blazing! The men of Tonga halt, many of them fall to the ground, and the rest run back to the woods! By the great god of Kau, we have beaten them! They are still near the tunnel gate or we could go forth now and hail the victors."

"Do not be so sure of victory yet, Malia. I think more men were left in the war canoes and these will now come up and join their comrades. Wait a bit, my girl. We must have patience."

But Malia had left his side. She had heard a rustling in the outer room and had stolen forth to see what had caused it. Her eye caught a dark figure gliding silently down the hallway. It was Toli. Her savage intuition sent a fear of treachery to her heart. She ran after the man, lightly treading and making no sound. But after peering about in the dim light of corridors and into dark corners of rooms, she came back, smiling at her fears. She softly opened the door of the room where Vining sat before the screen, so absorbed that he did not note her return. There had been no change in the position of the combatants by the lake shore and the lull was wearying. To relieve the tedium for the moment, Vining had taken up a small photographic transparency, the image in which he now projected upon the screen into the sky above the wooded hills of Kau. Malia saw the picture. It was that of a young and very beautiful white woman, to whom Vining addressed warm words of love in half-whispers, yet audible to the dark creature, and each word pricked at her heart and stung her. She leaned upon the lintel, her world reeling beneath her.

"Marcia," she heard him say, "Marcia, I will send for you now and you shall come here and be queen of my island. Its simple people shall work only to save you. I will send for you and you shall come and be my bride."

Malia, stricken, made no sound, but she stole away again and ran with indirection about the palace. Now and then she would pause and look out into the depths and wish that she might escape beyond sight or sound of the man she loved. In one of the darkest

corners near the gate that led to the tunnel she was suddenly grasped in the arms of Toli.

"Malia, dearest!" he breathed hotly, "come with me and leave your white lover! Come!"

Her hurt love and her hurt pride responded quickly,

"Yes, Toli, I will go with you." Yet a moment before she had hated this man and she had always shrunk away from him and his oft-told tales of love.

They passed through the gate and stood in the tunnel outside. Here Toli turned, and, taking the keys, double-locked the gate. Then, taking some heavy iron bars, he propped them against the great door.

- "What are you doing, Toli?" she demanded, in instant alarm.
- "I am locking him up in his tomb. He will never escape from that place. I have opened a secret flood-gate, a small hole that I made in the masonry when we were building the palace. He knows naught of it. The hole is in the first chamber to the left of this gate. That room is lowest of all. It will fill up first. It will be full before the floor is wet where he is. There is no escape for him."
- "Toli! Toli!" she cried, in an agony of fear. "Why did you do this?"
- "Because I hate him and I am a Tongan. Come, I will take you with me to my people. You shall be a princess in Tonga, a great woman. Come!"

He grasped her fiercely and fairly dragged her along the passage. Soon they were nearly through the tunnel.

- "O Toli!" she gasped in affright. "I am so wearied. Do not pull me so fast. Let me rest. How large did you say the hole in the masonry was?"
  - "As large as your body about the hips. Why do you ask?"
- "Do you think the lower chamber is full yet?" she asked shuddering.
  - "Perhaps. No, maybe not. It is a large room."
- "Then," she thought, "the water is not up to him yet. I could save him. As large as my body about the hips!" She sank back upon the ground at the tunnel's mouth.
  - "Oh, I am so tired, Toli!" she pleaded. "Let me rest."

"Well, stay here a moment while I go out and see how the fight is going on. Of course, our people of Tonga are victors, or will be soon."

"Ah, he does not know what I saw upon the screen! I am a woman of Kau. I shall never go with him to Tonga. Princess? Bah! A Kauan slave is better than a Tongan princess. Quick, or I shall be too late."

She rose like a deer, and like a deer ran above the mouth of the tunnel and stood amid the rocks by the lake shore. She saw the Tongans fleeing away in the distance toward the sea and farther out she saw more Tongans, pushing their canoes from the shore and embarking hastily in flight. She saw Toli running back to the tunnel's mouth, knife in hand, and she knew that he was looking for her and would no doubt search the whole length of the tunnel, thinking she had gone back. She knew he would prowl in the passage like a wild beast. There was no entry that way. Quick! To the water, while there was yet time. Stripping herself to her dark skin, she plunged into the lake and swam like a fish toward the glass house. There was no better swimmer or diver than she among all the islanders, and she was not long in reaching the place where, looking down, she could see the iron ribs, though not the transparent roof of the palace.

Upon the vision of Vining who was gazing out into the depths there shot the strange sight of the beautiful Malia swimming under the water, within a few yards of where he sat. She was passing along the side of the wall and searching eagerly for something. He knew there was a cause for alarm and he motioned to her hastily. She could see him and she smiled the smile of a beautiful mermaid, her eyes showing clear in the water and her black hair streaming in a long mass over her back. He followed her on his side of the glass and soon came to the entrance to the lower chamber. He opened the door and stepped down the stairs a few feet, when his boots touched the water, and he drew back.

"Why, the place is flooded!" he cried. He turned a knob at his side and the electric lights above and below the water glowed sharply, lighting up every corner of the room. He saw the girl rising, but soon she dove down again. Both of them could see where the takus waved gently toward the wall, as if in a slight

current, and both knew in the same instant where to look for the hole in the masonry.

Vining saw her sweep a full, round arm and grasp a strong ropy taku, and with her head pointing away from the wall and her feet toward it, she let the current carry her gently toward the hole.

"Malia! Malia!" he yelled, with no smallest sense of what she really purposed. "Don't try to come in that way. I will let you in at the gate."

He motioned violently. Then he ran to the gate, near at hand at the end of the passage. He tugged at it.

"Barred from the outside!" he groaned. "That treacherous Toli!" He ran back, calling to Malia. She did not look at him. She could hear no word. Her feet had entered the hole and her body was quickly sucked into it up to the arms, which, being braced, would not permit her further entry. Then while he shouted and waved his hands and raged like a very madman, she quickly tore up the moss and the muddy clay and placed it about her body in the apertures that remained between her and the concrete. He saw, now that she had come forward, what she had done. With her body she had closed the flood-gate and stopped the flow of the water into the palace. She tied taku roots about her shoulders, and plastered about her beautiful breast more and more mud and moss, and then, peering above the edge of the masonry, looked at him and smiled a faint, watery smile, and yet one full of love and farewell.

"Malia! Malia!" he called to her in an excess of grief.
"Malia! To think that you should die to save me!"

She saw his lips move, and smiled and tried to wave her hand. Then a great throb moved her and large bubbles rose through the water from her mouth. Her shoulders jerked strangely and then she lay still, with her head pillowed upon the mud of the lake bottom.

But the water rose no higher in the room. With her body and with her life, Malia had saved the palace from flooding and had saved from death the man she loved.

Vining had two hours of reckless pacing up and down the corridors and needless banging at the tunnel gate before Somalii,

who had hastened from the telephone at his master's wild call, came running through the tunnel to set him free. On the way to the gate Somalii had met Toli, fleeing away like a fiend of the night and crying aloud, "Malia! Malia! Malia!"

"Victory, chief! Victory!" shouted Somalii. "The men of Tonga have all left the island and they have left many dead warriors, too."

"Yes, but I have paid my price for your victory. It is not without its cost," said Vining simply, pouring forth a world of misery with that breath.

The schooner came into the cove and there was a fluttering of a handkerchief from the after-deck. Vining rowed out in his boat.

"Fred! Fred!" was the glad little cry from over the rail.
And then on his nearing her, "How brown you've got!"

He kissed her and rowed her ashore.

"This is a great surprise," said he. "Of course you never got my letter. You were not to come, because the Tongans were making war upon us. But that's all over now. We have routed them, so there's nothing to fear. And I'm glad, after all, you took it into your head to steal upon me unawares."

He showed her about the island and she proudly noted his inventions, which looked so important and were so hard to understand. She agreed with him that it would be best to have the captain of the schooner perform the ceremony that afternoon.

"But your glass palace — Underwater House," she said. "I am dying to see it. How do you know I'll like it and that I'll be willing to stay here after all?"

"Oh, it's too damp to go in there. I've just had some leaks stopped and they're pumping out the water. Nothing to worry about, you know. It happened during our fight with the Tongans. You need never fear such an occurrence again. But you will like that house up on the hill there much better, anyway."

"Oh, anywhere," she chirped, "only I had thought a good deal about the glass house and the pretty divans and mirrors and all."

They were married on the veranda of the house on the hill and the schooner sailed away and left them in their tropic home. Next evening Vining was alone upon the lake in his boat. He was rowing shoreward with short, nervous sweeps. He sprang ashore hastily and ran fast. He had only just reached the house on the hill and Marcia, radiant in her soft white gown had come out to meet him, when a mighty shock made them both stagger and nearly fall. Then there was a low rumble and away out on the lake they saw a great spurt of white water which showed itself for a moment and then disappeared.

"What was it?" cried Marcia, clinging to him and trembling violently.

"That was Underwater House," said Vining, in such a good imitation of surprise that she could not have noticed anything of relief in the tone.

"Did a Tongan spy leave an infernal machine in it or something?" she asked.

"Yes, without doubt. A high explosive of some sort has been let loose there. Really, I'm not sorry. I had grown weary of it. It is more to my liking up here, where there is good air to breathe. I could not longer have endured the oppressiveness of that place."

"I thought you liked it. Was it so dismal there, after all?"
For answer he kissed her.



# the Black Cat

#### A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 43.

APRIL, 1899.

5 cents a copy.
50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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#### The Stolen Sky-Scraper.\*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.



OR seven years and a half it remained the most stupendous of mysteries — that perplexing and incredible event which took place on the night of the 28th of June, 1891. Black magic seemed the only possible explanation, and, except those who are Theosophists, we do not believe in

black magic any more. I know of two persons, at least, who became violently insane over that night's happenings, or rather, I suppose, their growing madness was precipitated by the event, and in my professional experience I encountered not less than a score of deaths which were indirectly due to the same cause. This is, of course, besides the lives that disappeared utterly with the great office building.

The building was known as the "Morrison," and it was the first of the modern iron sky-scrapers to be put up in the South. It stood sixteen stories, or two hundred and thirty-five feet high, and occupied a ground space of ninety-seven feet by eighty. It was constructed with a steel skeleton of especial rigidity, covered

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with the usual shell of brick and terra-cotta, while the first two floors were handsomely finished in stone. Next to it on one side was a paved area, used in connection with a tobacco warehouse; on the other side, and separated by a wide drive, was the Brown Bros.' building, looking flat and squat beside its towering neighbor. At the rear of the sky-scraper ran a twenty-foot alley.

The erection of the monster was not by any means an operation of pacific industry. Arthur J. Morrison, the president of the syndicate which was to put up the building, was well known as an uncompromising and bitter opponent of Labor Unionism in every form, and it was owing to his influence and assistance that the Cummings lock-out had been persisted in, the year before, to the strikers' discomfiture. His was a name hated in lodge-rooms, and as the consequence the men, while accepting his work, did so with an aggressive spirit of independence, keenly alive for any action that might be construed into bullying or injustice.

Mr. Morrison had not chosen to let out the work by contract but was seeing it through himself, and, whether or not he was aware of the feeling among his men, his conduct was certainly not conciliatory. It became known that he was getting his steel girders from the Boekh Iron Co., which was at that time warring with the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Iron and Steel Workers, and a deputation of the men of this order employed upon the building went to remonstrate with him. Mr. Morrison not only refused to listen to what he termed their "dictation," but ordered his foreman to "give these men their time" at once, and to engage others. This was a declaration of war, and at once every ironworker, riveter, fitter and machinist took up his dinner pail and marched home, leaving the half-completed framework looking like an army of dissipated gibbets.

The president not only declined to reinstate the discharged men, but announced his intention of completing his building by the use of "scabs," and in view of the enormity of this conduct a sympathetic strike was ordered by the stone and brick masons and the other Unions concerned. Mr. Morrison thereupon instructed his foremen to engage none but non-Union labor, and as there was an insufficient supply of this at hand he imported it from Penusylvania and New York. This action aroused the greatest indig-

nation among the strikers and caused a series of small riots which lasted till the completion of the building. On more than one occasion an armed mob attempted to intimidate the imported workmen from landing from the train; one day a high scaffolding fell with three men, and it was rumored that the ropes had been cut by strikers. A little later the crowds assumed so threatening an attitude around the big building that the mayor read the Riot Act and called out half a battalion of military. Happily no lives were lost in the fracas that followed, and the disturbance was smothered though not exactly quieted, but day after day the petty war continued, in spite of mayor and police. Under such circumstances the work did not progress with great rapidity, and it was not until the eighth of April, 1891, that the last of the painters and decorators left the completed building.

To the Union men it seemed an additional insult that the building should be called by their enemy's name, but as the "Morrison Building" it was opened on April 24th, and the Bank of Kentucky immediately established its headquarters on the ground floor. Offices were quickly let upon the other floors, and though no Union elevator man, machinist or electrician could be induced to work in the building, yet men were found for these posts and the enterprise seemed to promise every success.

On the night of the 28th of June there were many complaints received at the central electric light station of defective circuiting and unlighted lamps. Policeman No. 37, passing along his beat in the business portion of the town about one o'clock, found that quarter in almost complete darkness. It was a moonless, cloudy night, and as the officer looked up the unlighted bulk of the Morrison Building could not even be discerned against the black sky. As he approached this edifice, wondering a little at the absence of light, he was suddenly felled by a crashing blow on the back of the head, and he knew no more till he revived in the hospital fifty hours later. A few minutes after, a sensible tremor of the earth was felt by almost every inhabitant of the city, asleep or awake, and this was instantly followed by a smothered, low-toned roar, indescribably vast in volume, but dulled as if by distance. The sound was so vague in quality that it was impossible to locate it, but it was so impressive that mest persons ascribed it to an earthquake, and many sat up all night in expectation of a second shock. They were certainly justified in their apprehension, for the seismometer at the Observatory registered a very considerable vibration.

The few watchmen and night hands who were almost alone in the down-town city were most affected by the shock, but the sound appeared so distant that, as no damage was done, none of them went far beyond their doors to investigate in the inky darkness. They supposed it to have been an earthquake, since there was absolutely no blast such as must have accompanied a heavy explosion.

But with the earliest dawn the amazing truth stood revealed. The stately building that had towered over the city towered no more. From a distance it might have been supposed that it had collapsed in the night, but it was not so. An early workman was the first to discover the fact that the Morrison Building was gone bodily, actually spirited away, with not so much as a brick left behind. Where it had stood the ground was as level and smooth as the ordinary neglected vacant city lot, strewn with sticks and stones and an occasional rusty tin can.

The man put both hands to his head, in horrid fear that his brain was going. The other buildings stood undisturbed around, the early sun shone clear, a distant clock struck five. Everything was natural and as it should be, except that terribly incomprehensible vacancy.

Two or three other men now appeared on the spot, and they likewise stood petrified with sheer amazement. It is a dreadful thing, and near akin to madness, when you chance upon something that the brain positively refuses to accept, in spite of the testimony of the senses. Some approached the spot and poked about cautiously in the air, vaguely fancying that in some mysterious way the building might have become invisible; but there was nothing but thin air.

The excitement of that day was a thing never to be forgotten in the city. All business was suspended, and vast crowds besieged the place, so that a double cordon of ropes and policemen was necessary to keep them back. The sand-bagged officer had been discovered before this, and no less than five other persons were found in an exactly similar condition, all insensible from blows

on the skull, and the whole six were found within two hundred yards of each other. On their recovery not one was able to throw any light on the mystery, and they told an exactly uniform story of having been struck down by an unseen force. Meanwhile the hard-packed clay where the sky-scraper had stood was carefully examined by the municipal authorities, and some excavations were undertaken, but there were no traces of even the foundations. The missing building seemed torn out by the roots.

The insurance companies refused to pay policies on the lost building, alleging very plausibly that there was no proof of its destruction, but at the same time the rates of insurance on real estate were raised throughout the city. It was a period of panic for property-holders, and indeed for every one. The terrible mystery of the affair was a thing to prey on the mind, and it was about this time that two women became violently insane, unquestionably owing to the prevailing high nervous tension. A great many persons left the city, and nervous prostration became almost epidemic. A fact afterwards remarked was that the consumption of liquors increased nearly two hundred per cent. in the week following the disappearance.

Meanwhile, the most energetic efforts were being made to solve the mystery. The city offered a reward of \$5,000 for the correct explanation, and the Bank of Kentucky, which had lost nearly a quarter of a million in its vanished vaults, supplemented this by an offer of \$10,000 more. Excavations were made to a depth of fifteen or twenty feet where the building had stood, without finding the slightest indication that the ground had ever been before disturbed. Detectives and scientists were equally at a loss. It was suspected that prominent Labor chieftains might know something of the secret, but nothing could be gained by this suspicion, for the mode of operation could not even be guessed at. The newspapers at last put forward a suggestion that the entire city had been hypnotized by some unknown agency and that the building was really there all the time, and this absurd theory was for some weeks discussed with the greatest seriousness.

At last, and very gradually, the excitement subsided, for the strain was in truth too great for the public to endure. A gubernatorial election in the Fall helped to distract attention, and the mystery never quite recovered its grip. From time to time there have been tentative explanations put forth, but no satisfactory one, and this is almost wonderful, since, as I now know, there were not less than 350 men in the United States who were in the secret. But that secret remained a secret — up to this day.

Last year I was employed as a volunteer surgeon at the notorious Camp Wykoff, and there I came in contact with a private of Volunteers (I do not care to mention the regiment) who was gradually dying of necrosis. He was plainly a man of education and of unusual force, of a rather unscrupulous character, I should judge, but his conversation was interesting, and we came to talk together a good deal. I was able to perform some small services for him, for which he conceived himself under a disproportionate debt of gratitude, and one day he said to me rather dryly, "I can't pay you, Doctor, for your kindness, and I can't leave you anything, but—"

"Don't talk nonsense, man!" I said, rather brusquely.

"But I can tell you what became of the Morrison Building if you would like to know. I used to see you around the place at that time."

He told me that evening in the great dim hospital tent, where the mingled odors of iodine and tobacco smoke made the hot summer air unbearable.

"I was a walking delegate then in a large Labor Union," he said, "and I was in the councils of the big chiefs enough to know that they were ready to do almost anything to get even with that man Morrison, and in fact we all felt that way. It wasn't the cash in the bank that tempted them, though they didn't let that waste when it came their way. I don't know who invented the scheme, but I believe somebody found out about the cave, and they worked it out from that.

"It seems that there is a long cavern running under the place so that about half the town stands on a shell of earth from thirty to fifty feet thick. This cave is geologically like the Luray caverns in Virginia and the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, and it can be entered at a point some miles outside the town. The first I heard of the scheme was when I was ordered from headquarters to

hire a hundred of the most reliable Union men I knew for secret work at a dollar an hour. Then a man came from New York to show us what we were to do. We bought an old warehouse a block away from the Morrison building, and beginning in the cellar we tunnelled toward the sky-scraper like a lot of bank-robbers. I was foreman and had a hundred men under me, but they worked in shifts an hour long, ten men to the shift. We used to cut shafts right down to the top of the cave to drop our dirt out of the way, and it used to make us nervous to see that black gulf down below. But it wasn't long before the Union had men working down there too, as we found later.

"In the course of ten days we got under the big building, and our engineers marked out its sides for us. In ten days more we had all the earth under the foundations completely honey-combed with tunnels, so that it seemed as if it must cave in upon us. But the engineers had calculated the strain to a ton, and knew just how far to go. Towards the last we didn't drop the earth through, but stored it up in big cross galleries cut away from under the foundations.

"The shell of earth was, I remember, just about thirty-seven feet thick, the cave below was two hundred and seventy feet deep and the building was two hundred and thirty-five feet high. Now while we were tunnelling, a gang of two hundred men was working below, by the light of great fires. They had heaped a great pile of packed earth forty or fifty feet high, and placed with mathematical exactitude perpendicularly under the position of the building. We could see the light of their fires far, far down in the darkness when we looked through our dump shafts.

"All was finished by the middle of June, but we waited a couple of weeks for a dark night, and it came on the 28th. We had placed a dozen light charges of rack-a-rock, attached to an electric wire, in the tunnels under the big building, and all our men were out of danger and ready for business. We had cut the electric light wires leading to that part of the city, and we had two dozen men with "life preservers" stationed all around the block, instructed to knock senseless any one who came near.

"At a little after one we touched it off. There was a very

slight explosion, then a dull, rending roar as the giant building broke through its foundation. It was too dark for us to see it; we could only hear the appalling rush of its descent. Yet it seemed to go down slowly, for the sides of the hole were barely large enough to permit its passage, though no doubt our nerves greatly exaggerated the time. Probably it was not more than fifteen seconds before an earthshaking jar announced that it had reached the bed prepared for it at the bottom. In its new position, a few feet of its top remained in the bottom of the hole, completely plugging it, while the large chimney reached nearly to the ground level.

"In an instant we were all at work. The big chimney was broken off and the loose earth we had stored was hoisted up with inconceivable rapidity, emptied into the cavity and packed hard. There were two hundred men at work by the light of dark lanterns close to the ground and with no more noise than a low-toned hum that could not have been heard a hundred yards. When the hole was filled up and packed down hard we scattered over it a cartload of rubbish — and the thing was done. It had taken just one hour and thirty-five minutes after firing the shot.

"The strongly constructed steel frame of the building had prevented it from collapsing, but I heard that it was frightfully twisted and bent. There were three or four men in it at the time—killed, of course. Half the money found in the bank was divided among us, and the other half went into the fund for the support of strikes. I got \$300 as my share.

"After the job was all done we got together and took a solemn oath of secrecy, and I believe that it has been faithfully kept, till now. All I ask is that you will say nothing till after I am dead. It has been a mystery long enough; it is time that the Morrison gang should learn what was the power that did this thing."

I did not have to wait long, for he died thirteen days later. He gave me no names, and I have revealed none.



#### A Thousand Deaths.\*

BY JACK LONDON.



HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by; but now I

gave up attempting to breast the stream and contented myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged. I went through the regular school and college routine of a boy of the English bourgeois, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavored to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious folly, and was disowned by my people, ostracized by the society I had so long outraged, and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a firstclass passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination—from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic—to find myself at last, an able seaman at thirty, in the full vigor of

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my manhood, drowning in San Francisco bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sca, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an up-river steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming, louder; the waves, larger, fiercer—I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

The scene, of which I was protagonist, was a curious one. glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through the mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hosing but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before my life had become tangential, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the center of this was a vacuum gauge. The water in the tube moved upward and downward, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labor.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff three fingers of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted — my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognize me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realize, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'k'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the Farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most

opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "But only in the small matter of drowning."

But, to take a reef in my yarn — he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailors' mess, for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable stateroom and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages, and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an uncharted South Sea island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long, before I discovered the horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life, my father had abandoned the musty charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the general head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches as far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable.

It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvelous results we afterward obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thought had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality; and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method - and by practical experimentation prove the possibility — of renewing vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognized the futility of such endeavor after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco bay — but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his aerotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent the yacht away

for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open — I must submit. Escape from the island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had placed all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father but a scientific machine. I wonder yet how it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances, since the affairs of men were full of such.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it were best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing

some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple—a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condensed and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the hosing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognizant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on their respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much verve; but after two ineffectual attempts at escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison régime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at

the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

In a glass vacuum, similar but not exactly like a Crookes' tube, was placed a magnetic field. When penetrated by polarized light, it gave no phenomena of phosphorescence nor of rectilinear projection of atoms, but emitted non-luminous rays, similar to the X ray. While the X ray could reveal opaque objects hidden in dense mediums, this was possessed of far subtler penetration. By this he photographed my body, and found on the negative an infinite number of blurred shadows, due to the chemical and electric motions still going on. This was an infallible proof that the rigor mortis in which I lay was not genuine; that is, those mysterious forces, those delicate bonds which held my soul to my body, were still in action. The resultants of all other poisons were unapparent, save those of mercurial compounds, which usually left me languid for several days.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this did not affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once, he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine and chloroform, were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray toward vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tamper-

ing with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my moribund occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation, which Astor has named "apergy." Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished to not only discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disintegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

It must not be understood that this force, which I finally came to control, annihilated matter; it merely annihilated form. Nor, as I soon discovered, had it any effect on inorganic structure; but to all organic form it was absolutely fatal. This partiality puzzled me at first, though had I stopped to think deeper I would have seen through it. Since the number of atoms in organic molecules is far greater than in the most complex mineral molecules, organic compounds are characterized by their instability and the ease with which they are split up by physical forces and chemical reagents.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their purpose by focusing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight whiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, which are equally colorless and odorless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second blacky, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation — perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odor of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were not.

#### The Horn of Marcus Brunder.\*

BY HOWARD REYNOLDS.



CKING his way carefully through the crowded down-town streets I had often noticed a strange, bent figure — a man of remarkably shrewd and intelligent face — but having the appearance of premature age and wearing that look peculiar to those deprived of some important faculty.

What he lacked I could not conjecture. At first I thought the shrewd eyes might be sightless, but the man never hesitated in taking a step among the whirling vehicles. Then deafness suggested itself as the old man's infirmity, but was in turn dismissed. The enormous horn slung to a strap across his shoulder did not resemble a speaking trumpet — it looked more like an immense megaphone, except for its gracefully curved outlines and handsome enamel and nickel finish. The peculiarity that attracted most attention — one at which almost every idle pedestrian stopped to stare - was the odd-looking old man's inveterate habit of hitching up one shoulder and frequently bringing the smaller end of his queer horn on a line with his hat brim. The only remaining alternative, therefore, seemed to suggest that this strange looking individual must be dumb, but had contrived some extraordinary kind of instrument for making himself intelligible to others; but here theory was opposed by the fact that, so far as my observation went, he never tried to communicate with others.

It was, therefore, with surprise, not unmixed with gratification, that I saw him one day stop suddenly, with one of his peculiar hitches, and extend a cordial hand to my friend Hudson, who is in the electrical supply business. They carried on a brief, but apparently animated, conversation, and when they separated I hastened after Hudson and enquired the name of his queer acquaintance.

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"That!" cried Hudson. "Why, that's Marcus Brunder and his horn. I thought everybody knew about Marcus. Come, step in and lunch with me, and I'll tell you all about him."

As we lunched Hudson talked, and told me the following strange story, and as I give it pretty nearly in his exact words, I shall use no marks of quotation:

For years, you know, I have had a store fronting on Devonshire Street. It is on the ground floor, its large plate-glass windows afford a broad view of the busy thoroughfare, and above all, it is particularly central and convenient.

But it is frightfully, maddeningly noisy.

The great drays that continually pour through this main artery of commerce produce a roar of wheels and clatter of vehicles that fairly shake the building. With the ventilator-windows open we are deafened — with them closed we simply stifle. Ordinary conversation is rendered practically impossible during business hours.

Formerly I used to take prospective buyers into the big fireproof vault at the extreme rear of the office, until one day there was trouble with the lock. I happened to be inside at the time. So was the president of one of the largest concerns in New England.

It was a cheerful moment when, after two hours of semisuffocation with our noses against a cold steel door-sill, the professional safe-openers on the outside announced that they would be obliged to use dynamite. When we crawled out the prospective customer had lost both eyebrows, most of his hair, and one whisker. And he didn't buy the goods, after all!

But, notwithstanding all the drawbacks, I have somehow stuck to the same old store; why, I can't exactly say; it's just my disposition. I hate a change.

One morning I had just arrived in my office, when in walked Brunder. Now, I'm not saying a word against Brunder. He's an inventor, and — unlike most of them — some of the things he gets up actually work. We paid him a thousand dollars for a single device only last spring. It lasted him just two weeks. Then he started in to invent something else.

Well, anyway, Brunder came in and sat down. I yanked open a couple of ventilators to let in the fresh morning air, and conversation immediately became an athletic feat. We communicated,

partly in pantomime, for some time, when Brunder suddenly yelled, "Say, I have a scheme."

"What is it now?" I yelled back.

"Shut those infernal transoms and I'll tell you," said he.

I did as he requested and he proceeded.

"This noise is something terrible," he vociferated, sitting close to me and talking into my ear.

I nodded. Some years ago I learned to save my strength.

"But I have a plan for doing away with it entirely!"

I looked surprised.

"It's based on well-known principles of physics, but is an entirely original and unique application of them."

I looked still more surprised.

"It just came to me as I was sitting here," he explained.
"You know that it has been proven that both light and sound travel in waves! Also that it's an old law of physics that 'action and reaction are equal."

I nodded again with a grin — recollecting at the moment the spectacle I had once seen of two colored waiters, laden with dishes, on opposite sides of a swing-door, each trying to kick his way through at the same instant. I told this to Brunder.

- "Precisely; that's the point! The door stood still!" he exclaimed. "Now, I read the other day that somebody has discovered that by throwing beams of light of the same intensity directly at each other the light waves nullified each other and produced a distinct zone of darkness. That being the case, what's the matter with generating a sound of equal intensity and projecting it against the other sound and letting the sounds, as it were, swallow each other up—like the Kilkenny cats!"
  - "And sitting in the resulting sound vacuum?" I asked.
  - " Precisely."
- "Well, but how are you ever going to work to do that?" I asked, incredulously.
- "Easy enough. There is such a thing as a microphone an instrument that so magnifies sound that you can hear a fly walk."
- "So I believe," said I. "If I remember, it consists of a tiny double-pointed carbon suspended between two standards and connected with a receiver."

"Exactly so. Now take a Wheatstone bridge, such as is used in the naval range finders, and rig it up so that varying impulses will work, by means of electro-magnets, a sliding plug in, say, an organ pipe, adjusting it automatically to any pitch. Connect the pipe up with a motor-driven compressed air blower, and there you are!"

"Why," concluded the excited inventor in a burst of enthusiasm, "it would make this bedlam of an office as quiet and peaceful as a village church.

"But it will take just a little money," he continued with an appealing glance. "Simply for a few preliminary experiments; and, if there's anything at all in it — there's a fortune!"

Thereupon I did an unwise but very human thing. I think the amount was twenty-five dollars.

Days came and went, and with them the radiant and sanguine Brunder. First it was drawings and then it was patterns, and last it was twelve-gauge copper and insulating tape, and slowly, with the aid of sundry and numerous five and ten-dollar bills the marvellous mechanism went together.

Brunder, from time to time, reported good progress and finally came in one afternoon with the startling, and to me most unexpected announcement, that the thing actually would work.

"Not perfectly by any means, just yet — for it's full of flickers and stutters and skips — something like a phonograph; but just give me a week."

I did - and also a check for fifty.

At the end of that time he came in, exultant.

We shut the ventilators so he could talk, and he imparted to me in a hoarse and joyous whisper that it was a "sure winner." "Just one more test," said he, "and then I'll show it to you. I've just this minute got the permission of the Government to try it down to the Sandy Hook Proving Grounds. If it stands that it will stand anything. And the non-auditory radius is three feet four," said he with pride.

It would cost just \$14.75 to get to the Sandy Hook Proving Grounds and return. In my joy I made it an even \$15.

After the date when Brunder was due back from New York I missed him for three days. At the end of that time I ran around

to the little eighth story back room which he uses as a sort of office and laboratory.

The first thing my eyes fell upon, as I opened the door, was a huge piece of mechanism, which might have been anything from an incubator to a steam mangle, and which emitted a low droning. Beyond was Brunder sitting with his back to me, at a desk.

As I shut the door he did not look around, but continued his writing, undisturbed. Then I noticed, suspended from the ceiling, and within reach of Brunder's hand, the immense horn that has puzzled you and others so much.

"By Jove," said I, with a gasp of astonishment, "I believe the thing does work, after all!" I looked narrowly to see if the deak was connected with a wire, or whether his chair stood on an insulated mat, or anything of the kind. Then I walked toward him. I found I could plainly hear my own footsteps as well as other sounds, but, apparently, he was in the charmed zone and oblivious to any noise. I touched him on the shoulder, and with a jump of startled surprise he brought the small end of the horn to his ear, with that peculiar jerk of his, and said "Hello!"

"Well, tell us all about it?" I asked.

He leaned further toward me and hitched the big horn closer.

"What luck did you have, old man?" I rejoined, louder.

He shook his head mournfully and handed out a pad and pencil.

"This is great," I scrawled. "You're a wonder. I always knew you'd do it."

"Well—I don't know," said he. "I took my position six feet to one side of a 12-inch coast defence mortar. The charge was five hundred pounds. I can't tell whether my machine worked or not. They pulled the string—and I haven't heard anything since!"

But he has learned since then, by constant practice at the little end of the horn, to hear much of what is going on around him!



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THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO., Beston, Mass.

#### The Shadow on the Wall.\*

BY C. B. LEWIS.



HE great mutiny of the native troops in India had been crushed and only its flickering embers remained to be scattered to the winds. Savage and inhuman had been the deeds of the rebellious Sipáhís, and strange and cruel was the vengeance visited upon them. Even as in the

beginning the peculiar beliefs of the rank and file impelled them to credit the cunningly circulated lie that the Feringhis were plotting, by forcing Hindu and Muhammadan to put to their lips cartridges greased with the fat of unclean animals, to deprive true believers of their caste, and therefore of honor, social position and everything worth having, so now in the end the English took advantage of the ingrained superstition of their prisoners to punish them in a manner which, the natives believed, would deprive them of their souls and render them malignant ghosts after death.

The spacious military parade ground at Kanhpúr was surrounded by a dense mass of troops and people. Twenty thousand spectators covered the ground like ants, climbed the shade trees, weighed down the house-tops and jostled each other at every window. Six thousand redcoats, in serried ranks, held two sides of a hollow square — the north and west. On the east were the spectators. On one side the square was entirely open — on the south, toward the dominions of Yama, the Lord of Death! For four hundred yards, along the northern side of the square, were drawn up twenty-four field pieces, and a little knot of artillerymen stood at every gun.

For a long half-hour the sun blazed down upon this ominous scene. There was no movement in the ranks of the military — no sound above a whisper in the compact crowd of spectators. Something more dreadful than the fear of death hung over all. It

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was a spectacle deliberately planned, one whose climax would never be forgotten — whose story would live a hundred years.

Suddenly the blare of bugles broke the silence, and a small detachment of troops came marching into the square, guarding twenty-four natives who had been condemned to death—death for treason, murder, arson, robbery—not a crime in any code of which some of them had not been guilty. Along the line of guns marched the guard, till each prisoner had been left with his back lashed to the muzzle of a loaded cannon. Not one of them had plead for mercy before the judge, not one had wept or cursed at his sentence, not one of them would die a craven's death to-day, though fully believing that spiritual as well as bodily destruction would ensue. There were grim smiles as they were bound to the guns. Heads were turned to the left to survey the mob, almost with exultation, and twisted to the right to look upon the soldiers for the last time, with contempt and hate.

If any in that vast throng had expected, when the last victim was bound to the engine of his destruction, to see the twenty-four guns discharged simultaneously, he was speedily undeceived. That would end the awful and impressive spectacle all too soon. Therefore Major Clavering had ordered the firing to begin on the right of the line, farthest from the spectators, so that, as each gun boomed out, strewing the plain with its ghastly shower, the next would be discharged nearer and yet nearer, to the shrinking, quivering, sickened but fascinated multitude. It was to be one gun every thirty seconds.

Again the bugles sounded, the drums rolled and the death warrants were read. Then the gunner on the extreme right of line stepped back, the Sipáhí at its muzzle held his head erect and drew a long breath, and ten seconds later he was as nothing. A shiver went through the great crowd of witnesses and every man sucked in his breath with a gasp — but no one moved or cried out. It was so with the next and the next — so until there was but one more gun and one more man to die.

Nanda Dín had not sought to escape, but not being very securely bound to the gun had pulled one arm free. Major Clavering stormed and swore at the negligent artillerymen, and as they nervously fumbled at the ropes the prisoner said to the major:

"I would not take life at your hands, if you would offer it. English swine, I hate you above all else on earth. I have killed and killed and killed. If I had a dozen lives, you could not take vengeance for all of your people I have sent to the Christian hell!"

"Stop that devil's talk," said the major, and the men tugged at the ropes.

"And you swore falsely against me in the court," continued Nanda Dín. "You charged me with many things I did not do. And now you have condemned me to be a bhút hereafter. Very well, you shall see what a bhút can do! And what I cannot do to your soul that shall my son, who lives after me, do to your body, and if not to you, then to the next of your accursed blood. I am ready!"-

Hardly had the last word passed his lips when there was a jet of fire and a crash, and Nanda Dín had perished.

Three years later Major Clavering was dead. No one had ambushed him—he did not die of poison—he was not struck down in the darkness as he walked a lonely road. He had been clawed to death by a tiger while on a hunting excursion two hundred miles away from his post. Only the day before Captain Clavering, his nephew and only blood relative, had been transferred from a reorganized regiment of native infantry at Allahabad to his uncle's regiment at Kanhpúr. The newcomer was a bachelor of thirty, and of course he took bachelor quarters. He brought with him his native servant, but within a month the man disappeared, never to be heard of again. Among a score of applicants for the place was a young Bengalí of twenty, Lal Rang, whom the captain disliked at first sight, and sent away with curses. Within a fortnight Clavering had given half a dozen servants a trial and kicked them out, and Lal Rang, applying again, was engaged.

Lal Rang was silent and humble in demeanor and moved about like a cat. His voice was soft and low and his tone full of respect, and any officer but Clavering would have regarded him as a prize. Not so the irascible captain. He said of the new servant, before he had had him a day:

"Gad, Major, I don't know what to make of that young nigger.

He knows his business to a dot, but I'd almost as soon have a snake moving about. It's the first time I've ever honored one of the lot with any feeling at all — good, bad, or indifferent."

"Knock him about!" recommended the major. "Now and then I get a nigger I can't make out, and I kick him around till he's as plain as A, B, C."

"A good remedy," laughed the captain, "I'll try it the first time I get an excuse!"

"Make your excuse," growled the major. "I got a sight of his face this morning, and I don't like it. He's a sulky devil, and wants a good kicking. Pátháns and Sikhs—Sykeses, as Tommy Atkins calls 'em—are grateful for decent treatment, but it's thrown away on a Bengalí. He only cares for a man he's afraid of. Give him the boot, sir."

As Captain Clavering sat reading and smoking in his bungalow that evening, Lal Rang came in to ask a question about the repair of a uniform. He came gliding in like a ghost, spoke low and soft and kept his eyes cast down. His coming, his speech and his demeanor all irritated the captain. He had not taken the major seriously about the kicking, and had no thought of following the half-earnest advice given him at the mess table, but now, as the young man stood before him, he felt a surprising animosity and vindictiveness. Throwing down his book he half rose up, exclaiming:

"You cursed nigger, how dare you come skulking in on me like this?"

"The Sahib does not want a servant who clatters about like a horse," quietly replied the meek servitor.

"How do you know what I want, you son of a devil?"

Lal Rang folded his hands and bowed his head. His attitude expressed the deepest humility, and yet it increased the captain's anger. Years had passed since that tragic scene on the parade ground a quarter of a mile away. The words of the Sipáhi who was the last to die that day had been reported by the newspapers, and had been read by Captain Clavering at his distant post—read, sneered at, and soon forgotten.

But now, as he sat there, fiercely regarding the young native, the threat of the man about to be blown to atoms from a gun came back to him with a sudden shock. He drew in his breath with a sound which caused Lal Rang to raise his eyes for an instant.

There was one swift glance, like the thrust of a dagger, and the captain sprang to his feet and caught the servant by the throat and shook him as he hissed:

"You dog — you are the son of the fiend who was blown away that day!"

Rang made no resistance. Choked and flung about for a moment, and then backed up against the wall and released, he did not even lift a hand. Still with bowed head and folded arms he whispered:

- "The Sahib is a gentleman; he is most high and sacred; it is for him to do with me as he will."
  - "Speak, wretch! Are you not the son of Nanda Din?"
  - "I am the son of my father, Sahib."
- "Budmash!" almost shrieked the captain, giving way to ungovernable wrath, "Instinct tells me you are my enemy. You would have cut my throat or poisoned me. I will have you hung—I will kill you with my own hands!"

His onslaught was so fierce that the hitherto passive youth now struggled for his life as the sinewy hands of Clavering closed about his slender throat and hurled him from side to side. Even this feeble resistance inflamed the rising rage of the Englishman till it burst all bounds, and seizing from a trophy of arms a native tulwar, he plunged it through the body of the boy as he crouched, panting and gasping, against the wall.

There was a court of enquiry, of course, though some of the officers considered it superfluous to make so much fuss over a "dead nigger." Lal Rang had been impudent and sullen — had even resisted and assaulted his master — and that was enough to justify Clavering. The atrocities of Nana Sahib, the memories of the well of Kanhpúr, right there in their midst, were too fresh in all minds to permit of any other result, and if the recorded verdict was not "Served him right," it meant as much.

On the night of the day on which it was rendered Captain Clavering returned at a late hour to his quarters from a mess dinner. He had not waited for the dead servant to be buried before taking on another. This new attendant should have been asleep long ago, but had not even gone to bed, and in the darkness the captain almost fell over him, sitting on the ground before the door.

- "What in the fiend's name are you asleep out here for, you cat?" exclaimed the captain, half drawing his sword.
  - "Come, Sahib, and see the shadow," quietly replied Gopi Mal.
  - "What shadow?"
- "The one on the wall in your sitting-room. It came as I lighted the lamp, and it will not go away. Come!"

There was something so quietly earnest in the servant's manner that the captain followed him in a passive way into the banglá. In the middle of the largest room, about twenty feet square, a lamp stood on a small table. Over the globe was a green shade, and the light was turned down.

"See, Sahib," whispered Gopi Mal, pointing with his finger.

On the wall against which Lal Rang had crouched as the tulwar found his heart was a shadow — the shadow of Rang! It had a crouching, supplicating attitude, and the right arm was thrown up as if to shield the face from an expected blow.

"Lal Rang!" gasped the captain, sitting down heavily and glaring at the shadow.

There was silence for a moment, broken only by the heavy breathing of the officer, whose wine-muddled wits required time to grasp the situation. Then he jumped up and cried:

"Fool, why don't you turn up the light?"

The deft brown fingers sought the screw and lifted the wick.

The shadow was still there, but not as dark as before — it had more of a reddish tinge.

"Off with the shade, idiot!"

"It is off, Sahib," and the action accompanied the words.

And now they looked no longer upon a shadow — it was a blood-red silhouette upon the wall.

The wall was of light boards, tongued and grooved together and finished in oil. It filled the space between two doors, and five feet from the floor hung the trophy of native arms. It was under this that the crouching silhouette appeared in red.

Captain Clavering, as a military man, had, of course, studied optics, and he remembered that red is the complementary color of green, and his fuddled brain tried to frame a theory that the

awful aspect of the shadow was caused by the sudden removal of the green shade.

So he made Gopi Mal experiment. The servant put on and removed the shade, and carried the lamp about the room. It cast black shadows here and there, but the red silhouette remained where it first appeared.

"It is some of your native tricks," growled the captain, after a while, "some of your cursed Hindu juggling!"

"The shadow came there at dark, as I lighted the lamp," quietly replied the man. "I knew what it was at once, and I was afraid to stay inside. It is the shadow of Lal Rang—it is a shadow of blood—it is the shadow of death!"

"Nonsense!" grumbled the officer. "I've been out here long enough to know your devilish tricks. If the shadow is there to-morrow night I'll bang the wall down with your head. Help me off with these things, and then to bed with you, and if there's any gossiping about this shadow business there'll be another dead nigger to bury!"

Captain Clavering rolled into bed and was soon asleep, but Gopi Mal passed the remainder of the short night on the earth, under a tree.

"Lal Rang was murdered," he kept whispering to himself, "and his shadow has come back for revenge. He has become a bhút, and can come in the shape of a tiger, a wolf or a bear. He will hunt his victim down in his sleep, and sit on his breast, so he cannot give an alarm. The Sahib may do as he likes, but the shadow will not go away till he dies."

At dawn Gopi Mal disappeared, and Captain Clavering long overslept. Major Dawes, who had given such vigorous advice about Rang, fearing something was amiss, entered the banglá and aroused the sleeper.

"Has the fresh nigger bolted on you?" he queried, as the captain huddled into his uniform, fuming and cursing.

"Looks like it. The miserable idiot was in a blue funk last night over something when I got home. Let's see — what was it? Oh, an image on the wall. Frightened him out of his wits and out of the house. I'd have thumped him if I hadn't been quite so balmy."

"Always thump them, full or sober," said the major as he walked about. "What sort of an image did he see?"

"Something in there on the panel under the swords and things."

The major entered the sitting-room with his hand in his pockets, and his lips pursed into a whistle, and looked carelessly around. It had been daylight for several hours, but, all the shades being drawn, it was still like twilight in the room. His whistle suddenly ceased, and the captain heard him utter an exclamation. There was silence for half a minute, and then Major Dawes returned to the bedroom with a look of astonishment on his face and a very earnest tone in his voice as he said:

- "See here, Clavering, I don't envy you that thing out there!"
- "What, is it there yet?" demanded the captain, pausing in his dressing.

"Plain as the nose on your face, and I'll be hanged if it's a pleasant thing to have about the house! Why, if it isn't the shadow of the nigger you did for the other day, then my eyes are away off!"

Captain Clavering, half dressed as he was, stepped into the sitting-room with a vague sense of uneasiness. He had only a dim remembrance of the previous night's experience, but what he saw now made his heart beat faster, though his blood ran cold. There on the panel was the red silhouette of the murdered Rang, faint, yet perfect.

- "What what do you make of it?" he asked of the major, after a long stare.
- "Looks tremendously like you were going to be haunted by that dead nigger!" was the blunt reply. "I've heard of such things out in this beastly country."
- "I'll pull the wall down right away."
- "Yes? Well, that's not a bad idea. See you later, old boy, and you can tell me how it worked."

Was Major Dawes in a hurry to leave the premises? Did he look at the captain in a strange, queer way? Clavering asked himself those questions as he hurriedly completed his toilet. He felt nervous and irritated over that shadow, and as soon as he had finished his almost solitary breakfast started to hunt up the company carpenter, to have the wall torn out.

But while framing an excuse for such an order it occurred to him that he might render himself ridiculous in the eyes of the whole post, where he was new, and without the reputation for tiger-like courage which he had at Allahabad. Let it go abroad that he was afraid of a shadow on the wall, and even the native soldiers would sneer at him. No; he would do nothing of the kind. He regretted that Major Dawes had seen the shadow, but he would laugh it off with him and stand on his dignity if any one else dared to even hint at such a thing.

Captain Clavering returned to his banglá and stood squarely before the silhouette and studied it. Then he threw open doors and windows and let in a flood of sunshine, expecting to see the last trace of it disappear. It did not disappear, though it faded a trifle. It would be almost sure to catch the eye of any caller, no matter how strong the light. The captain sat and gazed and pondered. Suddenly a feeling of relief filled his heart.

"How stupid I've been!" he laughed. "That stain has probably been there for months or years, but my superstitious nigger happened to discover it only last night. It's nothing new—it can't be new."

Clavering resumed his day's routine with a lighter heart, but a few hours later it occurred to him that it certainly was Lal Rang's shadow, and that Lal Rang had not been known about the cantonment till he first came to him, nor had the shadow been seen till after Rang was dead.

That evening at mess Major Dawes was courtesy itself, but distant. So were two or three of the others. Now and then Captain Clavering caught them looking at him in a strange way, stealing furtive glances in which pity and wonder seemed combined. When the meal was nearly at an end he secured the major's ear for a moment, and forcing a laugh, said:

"You know that shadow we saw on the wall this morning? Well, after thinking things over I concluded —"

"Excuse me, Clavering, but I haven't a moment to spare — not a second," interrupted the major, hastily withdrawing.

Captain Clavering had been sent to Coventry. There was no doubt of it in his mind. Looked upon as a man living under a curse, he was shunned by his brother-officers.

When he reached his quarters again that night it was late, not because of a wine supper now, but because he dreaded that shadow. It had been said of him in army circles and in the newspapers that he did not know the meaning of fear, yet that night he entered his banglá drawn sword in hand, and his knees knocking together as he fumbled with the lamp.

Yes, the shadow was there! Not an ordinary, black shadow—not even a faint pink silhouette—but a solid, blood-red image, sharp and life-like in its minutest outline, and looking so much like Lal Rang that a groan escaped the captain, and he felt cold, wet drops of perspiration covering his forehead and hands. And what startled him most—what clutched at his heart like the grasp of steel fingers—was the fact that the right arm, which had before covered the face as a shield, was now raised above the head in a menacing position.

"Good God, the arm has moved!" whispered the captain to himself, and his throat grew dry. "What devil's trick is this? It is the work of some conjurer, who hopes to frighten me off, but I'll beat him at his game."

Shortening his naked weapon, he advanced to the wall and jabbed a dozen times at the shadow, forcing the sword point through the boards. A live man would have been pricked, but there was no live man there in either room — only a grim, threatening shadow.

Those who had called Captain Clavering a brave man made no mistake. Had there been an atom of cowardice in his make-up he would not, as he did, have turned out the light and turned in to his camp bed. He slept fitfully, to be sure, and there were half-hours when he was much more awake than asleep, and strange, grewsome fancies flitted through his mind, but he worried through the night, and when morning came he looked no more for the shadow. He knew it was there. Neither at the mess house did he look for any cheery greeting. He was a doomed man, and others do not smile and shake hands with the shadow of death. He knew that the story of that shadow on the wall must have gone over all the cantonment, for he found officers whose acquaint-ance even he had not yet made looking at him askance and speaking in subdued tones.

At first, Clavering was rather glad that no one sought to draw him into conversation on a subject he would gladly avoid, but as time wore on it angered him to be ostracized, and turning to a lieutenant, he bluntly said:

"Look here, now, what in the devil is the matter with everybody? Have I become an outlaw because I killed a nigger?"

- "I—I—Why, really, nothing seems to be the matter," stammered the officer addressed. "Are you feeling—er—as well as usual, Captain?"
- "Of course, why shouldn't I? See any signs of cholera in my face?"
- "Oh, no, no, certainly not but you know a fellow sometimes drops off very suddenly in this country!"
- "And you think I'm booked to drop off suddenly, then. That's it, is it?"
- "Really now, Captain, I I Excuse me, but I want to speak to Flint before he goes on duty!"

Captain Clavering watched the retreating officer and half-moaned to himself:

"It's that cursed shadow on the wall! They've all heard about it, and they're afraid to strike hands with a man standing beside his own grave!"

Not being on duty that week, the captain again rode away to the city, and sauntered from place to place, having a drink here and a game of billiards there - always with a civilian - and he drank with a purpose. But when a man has the shadow of death on his wall he cannot be made drunk. No ordinary intoxicant can overcome the tension of his nervous system. He was sober when he rode away in the morning and just as sober when he returned at ten o'clock at night. He went straight to his own quarters, speaking to no one. He did not tremble this time when he lighted the lamp. His heart did not thump when he looked up and saw the shadow in its old place on the wall. He did give a start of surprise when he saw that the right hand was raised a little higher, and that the face bore a malicious look, but he had come to his quarters to go to bed - and to die! Yes, he had decided to surrender to the shadow. It would demand his life in revenge, but was life worth living, with such a thing contronting

him day and night, and his brother-officers holding themselves ready for a funeral march?

"Here I am!" he said to the shadow as he lay down for the night, "here I am, and we fight it out to-night! Either kill me or go away forever."

There was silence all night long in Captain Clavering's quarters. He made no effort to fight sleep away, nor to peer and listen in the velvet darkness. Dawn came, and all was quiet. The forenoon was half gone when an orderly, sent with a message to Captain Clavering, entered the banglá, after knocking vainly for admission. In a few moments he came running out, shouting an alarm, and as five or six followed him back to the captain's sleeping room they saw a sight that made them pale. Stretched out at full length upon his back was the captain, and a glance was enough to show that he was dead. Coiled up on his bosom was a hooded cobra, which hissed and threatened the intruders. When the serpent had been driven off and dispatched, Major Dawes turned to the others and said in explanation:

"He was a doomed man. There is a death shadow on his wall—the shadow of Lal Rang, the boy he killed. Come and look at it."

They went, but the shadow was no longer there!



#### The Woman In Red.\*

BY MURIEL CAMPBELL DYAR.



NTER reigned throughout Europe, but on the Riviera spring and summer bloomed together. Overhead the sky was infinitely blue, below the sea was green and purple and amethyst. Everywhere the sun, everywhere the scent of geranium and mimosa, the fragrance of rose and violet.

Always the deep boom, boom of the waves thundering against the tall cliffs of Monaco, always the cry of the sea gull, forever the chimes from the church of Sainte Dévote.

At Monte Carlo, that paradise of the gamester, the season was at its height. The Hôtels de Paris and Beau-Rivage were crowded, those of the quarter La Condamine were full, and well-dressed people, finding shelter in some cheap lodging house over in Monaco, gave the name of some more fashionable resort when applying for a carte d'admission to the "Cercle des Étrangeres," the euphemistic title of that institution which draws hither the avid and the inquisitive of all the nations. Day after day, night after night, the Casino overflowed with those who came to tempt Fortune. Every one laughed and sang and was gay. Heavy hearts are hidden at Monte Carlo.

It was at a concert that she first appeared—the Woman in Red. The French tenor was just beginning his number when the doors of the middle box of the right hand tier swung slowly open and closed behind her. She stood for just a moment outlined against the ivory background. Very tall she seemed, dressed from head to foot in red—not cardinal, nor crimson—but the most intense and glowing scarlet. From out this mass of color her bare throat rose vividly white, and down the satin of her skirt her ungloved arms hung, soft and round as those of a child. Her hair, too, fine and fair, gave her head a rather childish look.

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And then — no wonder fans stopped fluttering and silks began to rustle — her face was entirely concealed by a mask of dark red velvet!

The lady seated herself quickly, with a curious grace in every movement, and the red of her dress spreading out around her, stained as with blood the whiteness of the box. She raised her glass and insolently swept the house, moving her head so that the jewels in her hair blazed and flamed into the faces turned in her direction. A laugh floated from above as a woman in the gallery, with her programme twisted into a little roll, mocked the motion. The Woman in Red turned away her face with a shrug of her white shoulders, and sat through the performance quite still and indifferent. At the beginning of the last number she rose slowly, and gathering together her shimmering scarlet left the box. That was the introduction to the world of Monte Carlo of the Woman in Red.

After that, interest centered about her, increasing as her peculiarities became known. She never wore a suggestion of any color but red, and that alone was enough to make her conspicuous. Then the mask, thought to have been merely a caprice on the night of the concert, was never removed. That rendered her mysterious. She talked but little, going about silently, with a soft, light step. One might be quite alone, and the next moment suddenly aware of the Red Woman's presence. When the tall young Englishman who lost everything at a turn of the wheel went out into the Casino garden and, cocking his pistol in the shadow of the cacti, muttered, "I'll end the whole cursed business!" the Woman in Red murmured persuasively beside him, "Oh, I wouldn't-" and he didn't, and when a lady knelt one evening before the image of the Virgin in the church of Sainte Dévote, and whispered wildly, "O Blessed Mother, forgive me my sins!" it was the Woman in Red who finished softly for her, "and those who sin against me." This made her something more than conspicuous and mysterious — it made her awesome.

No one ever saw her smoke, but her scarlet garments always exhaled a faint odor of cigarettes. Every night she came into the roulette room and sat there in her scarlet dress, with a red flower in her hair, and put down her stakes with as much emotion as

though the gold and notes were worthless. Consistent in her color scheme, she invariably placed her money on the red, and nine times out of ten she won.

To make her a trifle more conspicuous, mysterious and eerie, she had for a chaperon a woman so thin and wrinkled and old as to seem hardly capable of life. When some one ventured to ask her a question about the Woman in Red the creature cackled, "Oh, the devil, the devil, the devil. How should I know?"

- "No wonder the men like her," chattered a lively little Frenchwoman. "They'd like us if we muffled our faces and wore clothes like that. I'll wager she has the face of a blanchisseuse — any one could be fascinating behind a velvet mask!"
  - "She is, certainly," said a bystander, drily.
- "Peste!" exclaimed the sallow critic angrily. "No one wants that old count or that stupid baron or that pink-cheeked English boy, anyway!"

It is true that the Woman in Red had found ardent admirers in the old count and the stupid baron and the English boy—the one to whom she had whispered that night behind the cacti—and the rivalry between them increased as the season passed. To-day one was in favor, to-morrow another, and the frequenters of the Casino got to betting on the chances of the several suitors till it became almost as exciting as a game at one of the tables.

But throughout it all the woman remained calm, inscrutable, mysterious. Neither of the three could persuade her to tell her name or take off her mask.

- "I answer to any name," she said. "I have forgotten my own, and as for my face, what makes you think it beautiful?"
  - "Oh, you," said the courtly old count.
  - "Your hands," said the stupid baron.
- "Your hair," said the blond young Englishman, with British egotism.

In answer to each she only laughed a hard little laugh, not altogether pleasant to hear.

To be much talked about and to say little appeared to suit her.

A month after her advent no one in Monte Carlo or Monaco knew a whit more about her than at first, and no one would have hesitated to give half his fortune — had he had one — to know

everything. The mystery of the masked woman was exasperating—the theories concerning her innumerable. Perhaps the majority of the women believed that, being very ugly, she had adopted this means of attracting the attention rightfully belonging to beauty. She was a problem which might be studied for weeks without arriving at a solution.

The warm southern days crept lazily along, and as sometimes happens even in that sheltered paradise, began to grow oppressively hot. It was on the languid evening of one of these scorching days that the Woman in Red and the young Englishman were gaming side by side at the roulette table. The air of the Casino was heavy and scented, there was a murmur of laughter and talk, and the frequent click-clack of the roulette balls. The woman pushed back her chair impatiently and said to the man:

- "Do come out into the garden it is insufferably hot in here!"
- "I should think," said the young man at length, as they strolled through the shrubbery, "that your mask would be unbearable!"
  - " It is."
  - "Then why not take it off?"
  - "I did not come out to talk of that."
- "But perhaps I did!" The British shoulders squared themselves aggressively.

The woman made no reply, but continued her occupation of listlessly slipping a ring up and down her finger.

"Oh, I have dropped it!" she suddenly cried, and stooped quickly to search for it. The low branch of a tree caught in the coils of her yellow hair. To free it she impatiently drew up her head. There was a sharp click, as of the release of a metal catch, and the velvet mask, loosened, fell softly to the ground. She made an inarticulate noise in her throat, and her hands were thrown upward in an ineffectual attempt to conceal her face, but the young man was too quick for her; There, in the bright white moonlight, he looked full at the face of the Woman in Red and, with a terrible cry of horror, fell like one dead upon the grass.

It was a long time before he opened his eyes and felt the touch of the woman's hand upon his brow and the cool trickle of water over his face. He lay passive, thinking of nothing. Then suddenly it all came back. "Oh, don't, don't touch me!" he gasped. "Keep away from me!"

He staggered to his feet, and pressed his hands to his eyes to shut out the vision that would return. His knees trembled and his teeth chattered. Something as white as the moonlight gathered at his lips.

The woman made an imploring gesture. "Oh, see, I have put it on again," and she turned her head that he might behold the velvet mask.

At the sound of her voice he shivered in terror and, without a word, but making a strange moaning noise, he ran, like one demented, in the direction of the lighted Casino. And in the still, white moonlight the Woman in Red stood like one of the statues of the terraced garden, its marble purity turned to scarlet.

The next night she was at her usual place at the roulette table, but it was the stupid baron who sat beside her.

- "Why don't you play?" he asked, as she sat motionless and indifferent, eyed curiously by the spectators of the game. She sat up wearily and pushed a pile of gold and notes upon the red, No. 12. The croupier started the wheel revolving rapidly in one direction and sent the ball deftly rolling in the other, and there was a little buzz of conversation. Tongues wagged briskly while eyes were fastened on the whirling wheel.
  - "What has become of our English friend?" asked one.
- "Gone home," was the answer from another across the table. "Perhaps the heat went to his head!" He tapped his forehead significantly.

Gradually the wheel slowed down, and the ball was about to settle with its customary click. Gamblers leaned over the table to see the result of their bets. The slowly rolling sphere was just dropping into No. 12! No, it has settled into the adjoining compartment.

- "Vingt-huit, noir gagne!" calls out the croupier with shrill monotony, and the shining heaps are distributed to the winners.
- "And Madame has lost!" exclaimed the stupid baron, in surprise.

The Woman in Red made no reply, but stood up and, with an imperious motion not to follow, walked steadily from the salle de

jeu, a vivid bit of color under the glittering lights of the splendid apartment.

Early the next morning she was found lying on the marble steps of the Casino, dead in her scarlet dress. The stain trailing along the snowy marble had been scarlet, too, but was now turning to a reddish brown. In one fine, strong hand was tightly clutched a folded note. The servants and people who gathered in trembling awe sent for the priest of the church of Sainte Dévote to read it. He came quickly, panting a little for breath. Taking the paper from the fingers of the dead woman, he glanced over it nervously, while the people looked on in breathless silence. It was written in French.

"I will read it," the priest said slowly, and he translated the writing in trembling tones:

"I have taken my own life—let that pass. Let no one lift the mask from my face but the priest of the church of Sainte Dévote, and I pray him, when he knows my secret, to say mass for my soul. By all that is holy, respect these words."

As his solemn voice ceased, those crowding about shuddered and fell back in nameless fear. They at once carried the body of the woman to where she had lodged, the early morning sun gleaming strangely on her scarlet garments and yellow hair. The priest entered the house and closed the door upon the crowd.

When he again emerged, he was hardly recognizable. His face, deadly white, twitched and quivered spasmodically, his eyes protruded and rolled wildly from side to side, and his lips were parted in an awful, unholy smile. His trembling hands could scarcely hold the crucifix. To those who spoke to him he made no answer—he did not seem to hear.

They buried the woman that evening at sunset, among the nameless graves on the hill behind Monte Carlo, as speedily as possible. When the grim, grotesque companion of the dead was asked if any one should be sent for, the only answer she would give was:

"Oh, the devil, the devil. How should I know?"

The priest from the church of Sainte Dévote mumbled the service rapidly and indistinctly over the grave, with one shaking hand raised in a defensive attitude, as though to banish something

or still the quaking terror that shook him from head to foot. When the ritual was ended he turned to the dense crowd which no secrecy or word of authority had been able to keep away, and said so sternly and distinctly that his voice echoed in the silence:

"Whosoever as much as dares to touch this grave, upon him I pronounce the everlasting curse of the Holy Church of Rome!"

Down the sloping hillside, back to the town he led the procession, all the way shaking like a leaf. When they came again to the narrow streets he suddenly stopped trembling and began to laugh, and at the sound of such laughter the people stumbled over each other in their anxiety to get away.

The Commissaire Spécial and the Administration acted promptly and with energy. There was an extra concert that very night, a grand ball on that succeeding, followed by a comic opera. At Monte Carlo it will not do to encourage reminiscence. And so, by and by, people stopped thinking, and began to talk of other things. The old count and the stupid baron were among the first to drop the subject. But when to the mad priest in his cell there came continually the deep boom, boom of the sea, the cry of the gull and the chimes of the church where he should never more say mass, he laughed, and laughed, and laughed — though he could not remember why!



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## Ely's Automatic Housemaid.\*

BY ELIZABETH W. BELLAMY.



N order for a man to have faith in such an invention, he would have to know Harrison Ely. For Harrison Ely was a genius. I had known him in college, a man amazingly dull in Latin and Greek and even in English, but with ideas of his own that could not be expressed in

language. His bent was purely mechanical, and found expression in innumerable ingenious contrivances to facilitate the study to which he had no inclination. His self-acting lexicon-holder was a matter of admiring wonder to his classmates, but it did not serve to increase the tenacity of his mental grasp upon the contents of the volume, and so did little to recommend him to the faculty. And his self-feeding safety student-lamp admirably illuminated everything for him save the true and only path to an honorable degree.

It had been years since I had seen him or thought of him, but the memory is tenacious of small things, and the big yellow envelope which I found one morning awaiting me upon my breakfasttable brought his eccentric personality back to me with a rush. It was addressed to me in the Archimedean script always so characteristic of him, combining, as it seemed to do, the principles of the screw and of the inclined plane, and in its superscription Harrison Ely stood unmistakably revealed.

It was the first morning of a new cook, the latest potentate of a dynasty of ten who had briefly ruled in turn over our kitchen and ourselves during the preceding three months, and successively abdicated in favor of one another under the compelling influences of popular clamor, and in the face of such a political crisis my classmate's letter failed to receive immediate attention. Unfortunately but not unexpectedly the latest occupant of our

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culinary throne began her reign with no conspicuous reforms, and we received in gloomy silence her preliminary enactments in the way of greasy omelette and turbid and flavorless coffee, the yellow screed of Harrison Ely looking on the while with bilious sympathy as it leaned unopened against the water-bottle beside me.

As I drained the last medicinal drop of coffee my eye fell upon it, and needing a vicarious outlet for my feelings toward the cook, I seized it and tore it viciously open. It contained a letter from my classmate and half a dozen printed circulars. I spread open the former, and my eye fastened at once upon this sympathetic exordium:

"Doubtless, my dear friend, you have known what discomfort it is to be at the mercy of incompetent domestics — "

But my attention was distracted at this point by one of the circulars, which displayed an array of startling, cheering, alluring words, followed by plentiful exclamation points, that, like a bunch of keys, opened to my enraptured vision the gates of a terrestrial Paradise, where Bridgets should be no more, and where ill-cooked meals should become a mechanical impossibility. The boon we had been sighing for now presented itself for my acceptance, an accomplished fact. Harrison Ely had invented "An Automatic Household Beneficent Genius.— A Practical Realization of the Fabled Familiar of the Middle Ages." So the circular set forth.

Returning to the letter, I read that Harrison Ely, having exhausted his means in working out his invention, was unable to manufacture his "machine" in quantity as yet; but that he had just two on hand which he would sell in order to raise some ready money. He hoped that I would buy one of his automatons, and aid him to sell the other.

Never did a request come at a more propitious moment. I had always entertained a kindness for Harrison Ely, and now such was my disgust at the incompetence of Bridget and Juliana and their predecessors that I was eager to stake the price of a "Household Beneficent Genius" on the success of my friend's invention.

So, having grasped the purport of the circulars and letter, I broke forth to my wife:

"My dear, you've heard me speak of Harrison Ely - "

"That man who is always so near doing something great, and never has done anything?" said she.

"He has done it at last!" I declared. "Harrison Ely is one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever seen. He has invented an 'Automatic-Electric Machine-Servant."

My wife said, "Oh!"

There was not an atom of enthusiasm in that "Oh!" but I was not to be daunted.

"I am ready," I resumed, "to invest my bottom dollar in two of Harrison Ely's machine-servants."

Her eyes were fixed upon me as if they would read my very soul. "What do they cost?" she mildly asked.

"In comparison with the benefits to be derived, little enough. Listen!" I seized a circular at random, and began to read:

"The Automatic Household Genius, a veritable Domestic Fairy, swift, silent, sure; a Permanent, Inalienable, First-class Servant, warranted to give Satisfaction."

"Ah!" said my wife; and the enthusiasm that was lacking in the "Oh!" made itself eloquent in that "Ah!" "What is the price?" she asked again.

"The price is all right, and we are going to try the experiment."

"Are we though?" said she, between doubt and desire.

"Most assuredly; it will be a saving in the end. I shall write to Harrison Ely this very night."

The return mail brought me a reply stating that two Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Geniuses had been shipped me by express. The letter enclosed a pamphlet that gave a more particular account of the E. A. H. B. G. than the circulars contained. My friend's invention was shaped in the likeness of the human figure, with body, head, arms, legs, hands and feet. It was clad in waterproof cloth, with a hood of the same to protect the head, and was shod with felt. The trunk contained the wheels and springs, and in the head was fixed the electric battery. The face, of bisque, was described as possessing "a very natural and pleasing expression."

Just at dusk an oblong box arrived by express and was duly delivered in our hall, but at my wife's urgent entreaty I consented not to unpack the machines until next day.

"If we should not get the knack of managing them, they might give us trouble," said this wise wife of mine.

I agreed to this, and having sent away Bridget with a week's wages, to the satisfaction of all parties, we went to bed in high hopes.

Early next morning we were astir.

"My dear," I said, "do not give yourself the least concern about breakfast; I am determined that Harrison's invention shall have fair play."

"Very well," my wife assented; but she prudently administered bread and butter to her offspring.

I opened the oblong box, where lay the automatons side by side, their hands placidly folded upon their waterproof breasts, and their eyes looking placidly expectant from under their waterproof hoods.

I confess the sight gave me a shock. Anna Maria turned pale; the children hid their faces in her skirts.

"Once out of the box," I said to myself, "and the horror will be over."

The machines stood on their feet admirably, but the horror was not materially lessened by this change of position. However, I assumed a bold front, and said, jocosely:

"Now, which is Bridget, and which is Juliana — which the cook, and which the housemaid?"

This distinction was made clear by dial-plates and indicators, set conspicuously between the shoulders, an opening being cut in the waterproof for that purpose. The housemaid's dial-plate was stamped around the circumference with the words: Bed, Broom, Duster, Door-bell, Dining-room Service, Parlor Service, etc. In like manner, the cook's dial-plate bore the words that pertained to her department. I gave myself first to "setting" the housemaid, as being the simpler of the two.

"Now, my dear," said I, confidently, "we shall see how this Juliana can make the beds."

I proceeded, according to the pamphlet's directions, to point the indicator to the word "Bed." Next, as there were three beds to be made, I pushed in three of the five little red points surrounding the word. Then I set the "clock" connected with the indica-

tor, for a thirty minutes' job, thinking it might take about ten minutes to a bed. I did not consult my wife, for women do not understand machinery, and any suggestion of hesitancy on my part would have demoralized her.

The last thing to be done was to connect the indicator with the battery, a simple enough performance in itself, but the pamphlet of directions gave a repeated and red-lettered "CAUTION," never to interfere with the machine while it was at work! I therefore issued the command, "Non-combatants to the rear!" and was promptly obeyed.

What happened next I do not pretend to account for. By what subtle and mysterious action of electricity, by what unerring affinity, working through a marvellous mechanism, that Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Genius, whom — or which, for short — we called Juliana, sought its appropriate task, is the inventor's secret. I don't undertake to explain, I merely narrate. With a "click" the connection was made, and the new Juliana went up-stairs at a brisk and business-like pace.

We followed in breathless amazement. In less than five minutes, bed number one was made, and in a twinkling the second was taken in hand, and number three also was fairly accomplished, long before the allotted thirty minutes had expired. By this time, familiarity had somewhat dulled that awe and wonder with which we had gaped upon the first performance, and I beheld a smile of hopeful satisfaction on my wife's anxious countenance.

Our youngest, a boy aged three, was quick to feel the genial influence of this smile, and encouraged thereby, he bounced into the middle of the first bed. Hardly had he alighted there, when our automaton, having finished making the third bed, returned to her first job, and, before we could imagine mischief, the mattresses were jerked about, and the child was tumbled, headforemost on the floor!

Had the flesh-and-blood Juliana been guilty of such an act, she should have been dismissed on the spot; but, as it was, no one of us ventured so much as a remonstrance. My wife lifted the screaming child, and the imperturbable machine went on to readjust the bed with mechanical exactitude.

At this point a wild shout of mingled exultation, amazement and

terror arose from below, and we hastened down-stairs to find our son John hugging his elbows and capering frantically in front of the kitchen-door, where the electric cook was stirring empty nothing in a pan, with a zeal worthy a dozen eggs.

My eldest hopeful, impelled by that spirit of enterprise and audacity characteristic of nine-year-old boys, had ventured to experiment with the kitchen automaton, and by sheer accident had effected a working connection between the battery and the indicator, and the machine, in "going off," had given the boy a blow that made him feel, as he expressed it, "like a funny-bone all over."

"And served you right!" cried I. The thing was set for an hour and a half of work, according to the showing of the dial-plate, and no chance to stop it before I must leave for my office. Had the materials been supplied, we might have had breakfast; but, remembering the red-lettered "CAUTION," we dared not supply materials while that indefatigable spoon was gyrating in the empty pan. For my distraction, Kitty, my daughter of seven years, now called to me from up-stairs:

"Papa, you better come, quick! It's a-tearin' up these beds!"

"My dear," I sighed, "there's no way to stop it. We'll have to wait for the works to run down. I must call Harrison's attention to this defect. He ought to provide some sort of brake."

We went up-stairs again. The B. G. Juliana stood beside the bed which she had just torn up for the sixth or seventh time, when suddenly she became, so to speak, paralyzed; her arms, in the act of spreading the sheets, dropped by her sides, her back stiffened, and she stood absolutely motionless, leaving her job unfinished—the B. G. would move no more until duly "set" again.

I now discovered that I was hungry. "If that Fiend in the kitchen were only at work about something substantial, instead of whipping the air into imaginary omelettes!" I groaned.

"Never mind," said my wife; "I've a pot of coffee on the kerosene stove."

Bless her! She was worth a thousand Beneficent Geniuses, and so I told her.

I did not return until late, but I was in good spirits, and I greeted my wife gayly:

- "Well, how do they work?"
- "Like fiends!" my usually placid helpmeet replied, so vehemently that I was alarmed. "They flagged at first," she proceeded, excitedly, "and I oiled them, which I am not going to do, ever again. According to the directions, I poured the oil down their throats. It was horrible! They seemed to me to drink it greedily."
  - "Nonsense! That's your imagination."
- "Very well," said Anna Maria. "You can do the oiling in future. They took a good deal this morning; it wasn't easy to stop pouring it down. And they worked obstreperously. That Fiend in the kitchen has cooked all the provisions I am going to supply this day, but still she goes on, and it's no use to say a word."
- "Don't be absurd," I remonstrated. "The thing is only a machine."
- "I'm not so sure about that!" she retorted. "As for the other one I set it sweeping, and it is sweeping still!"

We ate the dinner prepared by the kitchen Fiend, and really, I was tempted to compliment the cook in a set speech, but recollected myself in time to spare Anna Maria the triumph of saying, "I told you so!"

Now, that John of mine, still in pursuit of knowledge, had spent the day studying Harrison Ely's pamphlet, and he learned that the machines could be set, like an alarm-clock, for any given hour. Therefore, as soon as the Juliana had collapsed over a pile of dust in the middle of the hall, John, unknown to us, set her indicator to the broom-handle for seven o'clock the following morning. When the Fiend in the kitchen ran down, leaving everything in confusion, my much-tried wife persuaded me to give my exclusive attention to that machine, and the Juliana was put safely in a corner. Thus it happened that John's interference escaped detection. I set Bridget's indicator for kitchen-cleaning at seven-thirty the next morning.

"When we understand them better," I said to my wife, "we will set their morning tasks for an earlier hour, but we won't put it too early now, since we must first learn their ways."

"That's the trouble with all new servants," said Anna Maria.

The next morning at seven-thirty, precisely, we were awakened by a commotion in the kitchen. "By George Washington!" I exclaimed. "The Thing's on time!"

I needed no urging to make me forsake my pillow, but Anna Maria was ahead of me.

"Now, my dear, don't get excited," I exhorted, but in vain.

"Don't you hear?" she whispered, in terror. "The other one!—swe—eep—ing!" And she darted from the room.

I paused to listen, and heard the patter of three pairs of little bare feet across the hall up-stairs. The children were following their mother. The next sound I heard was like the dragging of a rug along the floor. I recognized this peculiar sound as the footsteps of the B. G. Then came a dull thud, mingled with a shout from Johnnie, a scream from my wife, and the terrified cries of the two younger children. I rushed out just in time to see John, in his night-clothes, with his hair on end, tear down-stairs like a streak of lightning. My little Kitty and the three-year-old baby stood clasped in each other's arms at the head of the stairs, sobbing in terror, and, half-way down, was my wife, leaning over the railing, with ashen face and rigid body, her fascinated gaze fixed upon a dark and struggling mass in the hall below.

John, when he reached the bottom of the stairs, began capering like a goat gone mad, digging the floor with his bare heels, clapping his hands with an awful glee, and shouting:

"Bet your bottom dollar on the one that whips!"

The Juliana and the Bridget were fighting for the broom!

I comprehended the situation intuitively. The kitchen-cleaning, for which the Fiend had been "set," had reached a point that demanded the broom, and that subtle, attractive affinity, which my friend's genius had known how to produce, but had not learned to regulate, impelled the unerring automaton towards the only broom in the house, which was now in the hands of its fellow-automaton, and a struggle was inevitable. What I could not understand — Johnnie having kept his own counsel — was this uncontrollable sweeping impulse that possessed the Juliana.

However, this was no time for investigating the exact cause of the terrific row now going on in our front hall. The Beneficent Geniuses had each a firm grip of the broom-handle, and they might have performed the sweeping very amicably together, could they but have agreed as to the field of labor, but their conflicting tendencies on this point brought about a rotary motion that sent them spinning around the hall, and kept them alternately cracking each other's head with a violence that ought to have drawn blood. Considering their life-likeness, we should hardly have thought it strange if blood had flowed, and it would have been a relief had the combatants but called each other names, so much did their dumbness intensify the horror of a struggle, in the midst of which the waterproof hoods fell off, revealing their startlingly human countenances, not distorted by angry passions, but resolute, inexorable, calm, as though each was sustained in the contest by a lofty sense of duty.

"They're alive! Kill 'em! Kill 'em, quick!" shrieked my wife, as the gyrating couple moved towards the stair-case.

"Let 'em alone," said Johnnie — his sporting blood, which he inherits from his father, thoroughly roused — dancing about the automatic pugilists in delight, and alternately encouraging the one or the other to increased efforts.

Thus the fight went on with appalling energy and reckless courage on both sides, my wife wringing her hands upon the staircase, our infants wailing in terror upon the landing above, and I wavering between an honest desire to see fair play and an apprehensive dread of consequences which was not unjustified.

In one of their frantic gyrations the figures struck the hat-rack and promptly converted it into a mass of splinters. In a minute more they became involved with a rubber plant — the pride of my wife's heart — and distributed it impartially all over the premises. From this they caromed against the front door, wrecking both its stained-glass panes, and then down the length of the hall they sped again, fighting fiercely and dealing one another's imperturbable countenances ringing blows with the disputed broom.

We became aware through Johnnie's excited comments, that Juliana had lost an ear in the fray, and presently it was discernible that a fractured nose had somewhat modified the set geniality of expression that had distinguished Bridget's face in its prime.

How this fierce and equal combat would have culminated if further prolonged no one but Harrison Ely can conjecture, but it came to an abrupt termination as the parlor clock chimed eight,

the hour when the two automatons should have completed their appointed tasks.

Though quite late at my office that morning, I wired Ely before attending to business. Long-haired, gaunt and haggard, but cheerful as ever, he arrived next day, on fire with enthusiasm. He could hardly be persuaded to refresh himself with a cup of coffee before he took his two recalcitrant Geniuses in hand. It was curious to see him examine each machine, much as a physician would examine a patient. Finally his brow cleared, he gave a little puff of satisfaction, and exclaimed:

"Why, man alive, there's nothing the matter—not a thing! What you consider a defect is really a merit—merely a surplus of mental energy. They've had too big a dose of oil. Few house-keepers have any idea about proper lubrication," and he emitted another little snort, at which my wife colored guiltily.

"I see just what's wanted," he resumed. "The will-power generated and not immediately expended becomes cumulative and gets beyond control. I'll introduce a little compensator, to take up the excess and regulate the flow. Then a child can operate them."

It was now Johnnie's turn to blush.

"Ship 'em right back to the factory, and we'll have 'em all right in a few days. I see where the mechanism can be greatly improved, and when you get 'em again I know you'll never consent to part with 'em!"

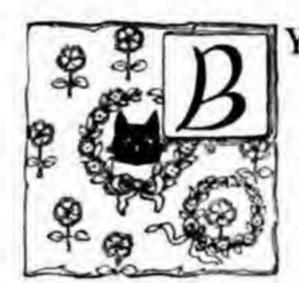
That was four months ago. The "Domestic Fairies" have not yet been returned from Harrison's laboratory, but I am confidently looking for the familiar oblong packing case, and expect any day to see in the papers the prospectus of the syndicate which Ely informs me is being "promoted" to manufacture his automatic housemaid.



#### Unmasked.\*

(Sequel to "The Woman in Red") \*\*

#### BY MURIEL CAMPBELL DYAR.



1.41

a strange twist of circumstances—call them coincidences if you will, or by another name if you can see relentless Purpose working through all things—I have lately, and almost simultaneously, come into possession of two remarkable revelations concerning the mystery of the

Woman in Red—the heroine of that most astounding tragedy of Monte Carlo—and they supply the threads to lead a thoughtful mind either to its complete solution or, perhaps, to a still mistier labyrinth within the borderland between flesh and spirit.

My friend Dawson, going up and down the earth in search of health, had been induced to try the healing summer air of southern Arizona and thither we went. The day after our arrival at our destination it rained, with all the discomfort to tourists of wetness in a climate warranted dry. Dawson, in his querulous, invalid's humor, railed at the unpleasant weather as we paced back and forth on the sheltered veranda of the hotel, his fretful eyes on the muddy street and the drift of the fine, white rain.

- "Always rain," he grumbled, "rain in London, rain in Paris, rain on the Rhine, rain in Rome, rain here, rain everywhere!"
  - "You forget," I said, "the Riviera."
  - "Ye-es," he admitted, "but that was two winters ago."

A girl passed by on the street just then, erect and graceful under her dripping umbrella. A gust of wind, blowing back the cape from her shoulders exposed its scarlet lining, which made a quick flash of color, in the dull, gray morning.

- "Monte Carlo!" exclaimed Dawson, with a sudden, backward leap of memory.
  - "Mystery and masks, and the Scarlet Lady," I said in return.
    - \* Copyright, 1900, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
    - \* \* " The Woman in Red " appeared in THE BLACK CAT for November, 1899.

It had come back to us both, at that flash of scarlet and my careless mention of the Riviera - the awful tragedy of the Woman in Red and the mystery surrounding it and her. We had worn the subject to threads in talking it over the first few months after we had left Monte Carlo, though it was certainly a fruitful subject: The strange appearance of the woman at the gambling resort; her caprice of color and her invariable mask; her success at the gambling table; the sudden disappearance of her young English lover and the well-authenticated rumor that he had lost his reason over the accidental sight of her face one night in the Casino gardens; her suicide immediately after; and, finally, the madness which had come upon the priest of Sainte Dévote, who had lifted the mask from her dead face at her request. But gradually the mystery had been crowded out of our minds by the new scenes and events of our travels and by the ever present anxiety for my friend's health, so that for over a year the subject had not been mentioned.

Now, in an instant, the old horror and fascination of it was upon me once more and I saw by the look in Dawson's eyes that it was so with him. I saw again the tall cliffs of Monaco, with the restless amethyst sea at their feet; the slender, curiously graceful figure in scarlet as it moved before us at Monte Carlo, in the flower-crowded streets and in the brilliant salle de jeu of the Casino, and I saw again the ugly stain darkening in the sun on the marble steps.

Without preface, Dawson took up the subject we had dropped so long ago.

"Jack, what in creation was behind that woman's mask?" he began argumentatively and with irritation.

"My dear Dawson," I answered wearily, "how should I know! Perhaps something outside the bounds of creation."

"I am sure she was the Devil," he said, after a pause, but without that emphasis which springs from conviction.

Then we took up the old theories about the matter, over which we had argued so often before. With a sick man's nervous fancy, Dawson insisted that a terrible deformity, or a disfiguring birthmark, or the signs of leprosy, if suddenly and unexpectedly revealed in the face of a human being, might, under certain condi-

tions, cause insanity. But I, arguing the question from the standpoint of vigorous health, was positive that, while such a revelation would undoubtedly be a shock, it could not, under any conditions, have so serious an effect on a sound mind. There were no special reasons for us to doubt the mental strength of the Englishman or of the priest, two men who had drifted together into the tragedy, apparently by the merest chance. Dawson grew cross over the puzzle and puffed his cigar vindictively.

"I wish I could get hold of that infernal old woman," he growled. "I'd get the truth out of her somehow."

A man with whom we had formed a slight acquaintance at the hotel now joined us, and the matter of the Woman in Red was dropped. I could see, however, by the wrathful crease in Dawson's forehead that he was thinking of it still.

His ill-humor over it lasted all day, even until the early dusk, and we went down to dinner. As he was then still taciturn, I amused myself by staring covertly at the people about me. There were the usual semi-invalids at a health resort and the usual curious tourists, eager over everything, from the February almond blossoms on the tables to the Arizona olives on the bill of fare. A little bored by the scene and not over-pleased with my dinner, I was about to rouse Dawson, when I noticed at the farther end of the table opposite us a big, fair, youngish man, half hidden from my view by a huge palm. His face was turned from me and I caught only the ruddy outline of its profile, shaded by abundant, light hair, noticeably gray. Then he turned and I saw his face.

"Dawson," I said, as quietly as I could, "Look!"

He glanced up in the direction I indicated.

"Oh, by jove, by jove!" he said softly under his breath.

It was the young Englishman of Monte Carlo!

I know that my face was flushed with excitement, and I heard the fork in Dawson's hand clatter sharply against his plate. Afterwards, in our room, we talked it over. Upon one thing we were agreed; we would ask the Englishman, point blank if need be, what was behind the mask of the Woman in Red. That he was the same boy, grown older more in looks than in years, whom we had seen at Monte Carlo was certain; that he was again in his right mind the circumstances attested, and that we must learn what he saw

that night in the gardens was, perhaps, the most absolutely certain thing in the world. We must know, even at the risk of unsettling his reason again by recalling the frightful incident. Dawson remarked grimly that it would be better to unsettle his than to lose ours, and delegated to me the task of bringing about an interview.

I bungled badly, but I managed it. Meeting him in the hotel lobby I claimed a previous acquaintance with him on the Continent, using glibly enough his name, which I had ascertained from the clerk. Being a gentleman and a slow-minded subject of Her Majesty, he did not disclaim me, and a quarter of an hour later he and Dawson and I sat together in our room, talking genially between the puffs of our cigars. We found topics of common interest in plenty and spent a pleasant hour chatting over our travels and the ranching possibilities of Arizona, in which the Englishman was evidently interested. Dawson began to grow uneasy and signalled to me to play trumps. Before I could think how to begin, the Englishman asked suddenly: "By the way, where did you say you ran across me?"

I had not said, but I did now, looking at him squarely:

- "At Monte Carlo, two winters ago." The fine color left his face.
- "You remember," I continued cruelly, "it was the winter of the Woman in Red sensation." He put up his hand to hide his trembling ashen lips.
- "For heaven's sake, don't!" he cried. But there was no thought of finesse on our part. Dawson leaned forward, his eyes big with eagerness.
- "What," he fairly shouted, "was behind that woman's mask?"
  And this is the story we persuaded the Englishman to tell. He drew farther back into the shadows of the room as he told it, his hand going up now and then to cover his lips, which trembled in spite of him.
- "You know the whole wretched affair, of course," he said, "if you were in Monte Carlo at the time. I wish I had not been! You saw how the Count and the Baron and I made fools of ourselves over the woman, I the most blatantly, without doubt. Heaven knows I could not help it, and I doubt if any man of my years and temperament could have done so. Whether it was partly the baffling mystery of her mask I do not know, but there

was a fascination about her that was irresistible. I begged her on my knees to let me see her face, begged her a dozen times a day, but she would only turn away with a bitter little laugh. The more she refused my request, the more convinced I became that she was beautiful and that her mask was only a caprice. I formed in my mind a face to fit her hair and her white hands and her charm altogether — a face so clear to me that, had I been an artist, I could have painted it. I was madly jealous of the suave old Count and the witless Baron, and they of me, but gradually I gained favor with her, until it was she and I who, as a rule, walked together and talked together and gamed together, I following her scarlet gown as if bewitched.

One night we left the Casino, where we had been playing, and went out into the gardens, away from the heat of the crowded rooms. Outside the moon made it as light as day. She was restless and nervous and would not sit down, so we walked to and fro on the terraces. The air was heavy with the scent of roses, and the moonlight was like wine. Half drunk with it and the gleam of her scarlet, I - oh, well, never mind what. I begged her again to take off her mask, and she answered lightly that she had not come out to talk of that. Angry at her refusal, I sulked like a child. She began listlessly slipping her ring up and down on her finger, and presently it slipped off and dropped to the ground. Before I could prevent her, she stooped to find it. A branch of a shrub caught in her hair and she drew back her head with a quick, nervous start to free it. I heard a little click, and her mask fell upon the gravel walk. Then I saw what I had longed so much to see."

Dawson sat up straight in his chair and my own pulse leaped.

"She was deformed, birth-marked, leprous — or the Devil!" broke in my friend.

The young Englishman drew farther back into the shadows.

"No," he answered nervelessly.

Dawson and I stared at each other, but something in the man's attitude kept us silent.

"There was a girl once at home in England," the shaking voice went on after a pause, "Margaret Allison, the daughter of a glover. I thought I loved her; at any rate, I told her so, for she was pretty, confoundedly so, and I was a young fool. Then I found out my mistake. I remember — I shall never forget — how she looked and smiled at me when I told her I could not marry her. She — she killed herself, and I went to Monte Carlo and lost money to forget about it. Now, you may believe this or not, as you can, but when that woman's mask fell, I saw at first a Thing — not a human face, but a terrible white blur — and out of this came Margaret's face, which looked at me with awful, hurt eyes, and with that smile — O God, that smile! And Margaret lay dead in England. You know the rest. I believe I was crazed for a time, winding up with a fever. Not till long, long after did I learn the final tragedy in the 'Woman in Red' sensation, coming across it one day, while searching for something else in a file of old papers. There! you have my story."

He rose then and leaned against the mantel for a moment.

"Do you wonder," he asked simply, "that my hair is getting gray?" Dawson's thin hands were twitching nervously.

"But what do you think - " he began.

The Englishmen stopped him authoritatively and turned to go.

"I do not think," he said, "if I can help it - not of that!"

When we were alone we could only sit and look at each other.

"Dawson," I asked finally, "what do you think?"

And Dawson smiled a very ghastly smile.

"I do not think," he answered. "I cannot."

We did not have much time to think after that, for the state of Dawson's health became so alarming that I had to telegraph for his mother and sister. Together we pulled him up again, and I, called home by business, left him convalescing in the sunshine.

I had been home barely a month when I received a letter from an old French physician, a resident of Monte Carlo, who had won a pile of bright twenty-franc pieces from me that eventful winter. This is an English version of his letter:

My Dear K.: — Do you remember the Woman in Red and her career that winter you were here? Do you remember the priest who went mad? Do you remember our interest in it all? Mon Dieu! A few days ago I was called to attend that priest, because I have some skill and am very cheap. I found him horribly ill; no hope, but perfectly sane — he had been that way for some days they told me — only not so ill. You know the mind sometimes comes back to a madman shortly before death. His face was yellow, like parchment, and shrivelled like a shrunk olive, with eyes —

ah, Diable, what eyes! He tried all the time to speak, but could not. Finally he signed to me, then fell back, dying miserably. Afterwards, I found this paper beneath his pillow, written by him apparently in his lucid interval. What do you think of it? Mon Dieu, I do not know what to think! Read for yourself.

The paper enclosed, in a pitifully weak hand, read as follows:

Has it been years, or months, or days that I have been here? They will not tell me. I swear that my mind again is clear as I write this—swear it by the Sacred Host and the blessed Mother of Heaven. Yesterday I heard them whisper among themselves that I must die, and I feel that it is so. Before I die I must confess what I saw behind the mask of the Woman in Red, since that was the sight which made me mad, and has kept me here these years, or months or weeks. Perhaps some one coming after me can explain it—some one more versed in the riddles of a weary world.

Before I lifted the mask from the face of this Scarlet Woman that day - whenever it was - I prayed, kneeling on the floor beside her, as one would for the soul of a sinner. I expected to see some disfigurement, hideous enough to be concealed, but nothing more. So it was with comparative calmness that I passed my hand under her bright hair, loosened the metal catch and raised the fatal velvet. Oh, that I could blot out what I saw! That it might not come before my eyes again! At first a white and fearful and shapeless Thing, not human. Then, though the creature was dead before me, there struggled into this a face, so faint I could barely see it, but, have mercy upon me, Merciful One! it was the face of my old mother, with livid, purple lips, looking at me as she did when I, with my boy's hands, crushed out her life, maddened by her cursed tongue. For long years I had kept my deed a secret, but now it cried up to me from this woman - how I know not. The face stayed only long enough to stare at me and burn itself into my brain forever - then it faded away. All this time, how long it is I do not know, I have had before me that fearful, unheard of Thing, through which something has tried to struggle, but, when I have nearly been able to see it, it has turned to a terrible scarlet, and I have laughed and laughed and laughed, I knew not why. With the scarlet stain on my hands and in my brain I make this statement -

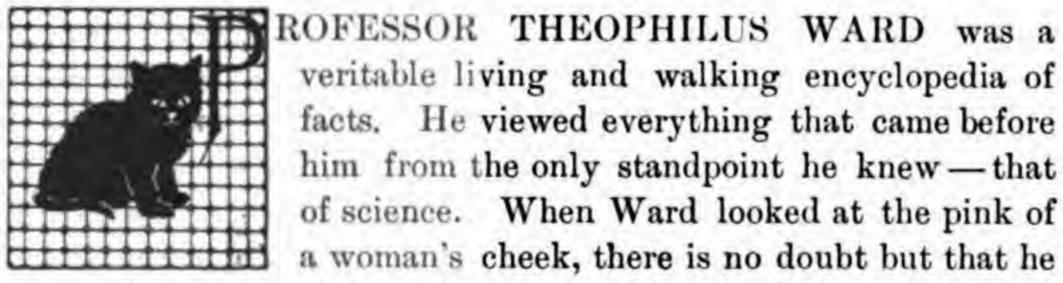
Here the writing became illegible and finally stopped abruptly. Below, the doctor had written: "Sacré Bleu! it is enough to make lunatics of us all."

Was the Woman in Red a key-board, played upon by the spirits of the dead — helpless clay, moulded by unseen forces? Had each one who had lifted her mask beheld beneath it the most awful vision of which he could conceive? Would the old Count have seen the face of the little vaudeville artist — bah! you know the story. What would the Baron, what would I, what would you have seen?



#### The Scientific Circle.\*

BY C. C. NEWKIRK.



at once began to calculate how many blood capillaries would be necessary to produce the degree of pink apparent; how deep these capillaries lay from the surface of the skin, and what addition, or subtraction, of heat, cold or emotion would heighten or diminish the glow. In short, Ward would look at a rose without seeing its beauty, but its integral parts he would pick asunder that he might analyze them in his cold, calculating, scientific fashion. He once said he had never encountered a problem in books or in life that he had not been able to solve by scientific deduction.

Physically he was tall and angular. As to the manner in which he moved he was ungainly, even awkward. The students called him "Old Cube Root" when his back was turned, or when he was so absorbed that he could hardly have heard thunder. Ward kept himself clean-shaven, but, in contrast to this, he never brushed his clothes. He had cold and keen gray eyes which invariably looked through great silver-rimmed spectacles. It is needless to add that Ward was never married and probably never will be. He would not know what to do with a wife. Possibly such a thing as marrying has never occurred to him.

In 1891 the professor's too close application at the college in which he has for many years held the chair of natural science, began to tell on him. He became emaciated, and it was apparent that his strength was waning, but Ward took no reckoning. He was advised by his physician and his friends to take a few months'

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rest in a change of scene and air, but he paid no heed. Then his condition became so alarming that a meeting of the college trustees was called and Professor Ward was temporarily discharged from his chair, on full pay, with an appropriation voted to defray the expenses of a three months' vacation, to be spent wherever his fancy might suggest.

Like a philosopher he acquiesced, and the day following started for Mexico, the flora and the mineralogy of which he had long sought an opportunity to study. Theoretically, he was as familiar with Mexico as book knowledge could make him. Professor Ward travelled by rail to New Orleans, from which point he embarked on a passenger and freight vessel bound across the gulf for Vera Cruz. In the railway coaches he sat calmly surveying the panoramic landscape, and on the deck of the vessel, aft, he lounged by the hour, his hat drawn down well over his eyes, which looked vacantly out through those great silver-rimmed spectacles, over the sunlit surface of the tropic gulf.

From Vera Cruz, Ward travelled over the Mexican-Interoceanic Railway northwest to Jalapa. There he tarried two days, picking up all the information he could that would be of value to him on his trip inland and making preparations for the journey. His outfit, which he bought at Jalapa, consisted of a trusty, rather than a beautiful, horse of sufficient weight and strength to carry himself, a repeating rifle, enough provisions for a fortnight, his botanical specimen cases, some drugs and a light mineralogical outfit. Thus equipped Ward left Jalapa and travelled north.

He had enquired carefully as to the possible sources of danger on his intended route, and was assured that he would be perfectly safe from molestation so long as he remained on the main road. But his plans did not permit of adhering to this altogether, and he was especially warned against a belt of very rough and rocky country, some half a mile or more in width, which he would enter after crossing what was known locally as "the divide." Amid the precipitous crags of that desolate region, where an incautious step or a deliberate push would send a man to swift and horrible destruction, many travellers had disappeared, and not by accident alone.

When the Professor had covered perhaps fifteen miles of plain, swamp and wood, the path became narrower and his progress

slower. When, at the end of a three hours' journey, he dismounted to tighten the saddle girth, he discovered the loss of a blanket, which had worked from under him. He remembered having seen it in place only a short time before and believed he would find it not far to the rear. Hitching his animal, he started back afoot. The quest led him a vain quarter of a mile, when he was suddenly diverted by what sounded like the tamptamp of a horse's hoofs, around a turn in the route over which he had ridden. There was a thick growth of timber, and he could see nothing. Acting on a first impulse, he stepped a few feet to the side and entered the obscurity of some twining vines. In this covert he waited.

The hoof-beats drew near, and presently a mounted man rode into full view and stopped. The rider was a swarthy Mexican, with flowing black hair and his steed a magnificent roan. Across the pommel of his saddle the Mexican balanced a Winchester, and, leaning forward, he studied the ground over which Ward had ridden. Strapped behind the rider the professor espied the blanket he had lost.

Why had the Mexican halted? Why was he carrying his rifle unslung? Why did he examine the ground ahead?

While Ward was weighing these things over the man on the horse rode forward and passed from sight. The scientist then became concerned for the safety of his own horse and equipment and followed stealthily in the rider's wake, keeping himself under cover and the Mexican in view. Thus the unique procession moved ahead to a point where Ward's horse came into view of the mounted man, who instantly crouched in his saddle, pulled his horse about, and moved noiselessly but more rapidly on the back track. Again Ward stepped aside into concealment and again the Mexican passed him, looking backward frequently. By a détour Ward reached his horse, mounted and proceeded with such apparent unconcern that he did not once look behind him. One would have thought he had forgotten the strange occurrence entirely. On the contrary he was carefully working out its solution, thus:

"The man behind me is a Mexican highwayman — a personage by no means uncommon in this territory. He is at this moment, and has been for several hours, dogging my trail. He will pursue these tactics until I leave the beaten path and strike off through the rocks across the divide. Then he means to shoot at me from behind, take my horse and effects and throw my body over a precipice! He believes me to be in ignorance of his presence and means to keep me so to the end. He is trailing me as much by broken twigs and earth marks as by sight, and can follow me unerringly and yet remain a mile or more behind. There is to be no open fight. I am not to have an equal chance. It is to be assassination. This move will not be attempted immediately. Fortunate thing I lost the blanket!"

The professor went into camp at sun-down. He chose a spot of considerable area, free from timber and much in the form of a natural clearing. In its centre he boldly built a fire and cooked supper, confident that, until he crossed the divide he would be perfectly safe. Afterward he opened his assortment of drugs and selected from among the many small phials one bearing a red label and containing a thin, colorless liquid, hermetically sealed. Instead of the ordinary stopper the bottle was provided with an automatic injector. This fluid was one of Professor Ward's triumphs in chemical discovery. Its most remarkable property was that on being exposed to the air its expansion into a gas was instant. Moreover, its particles as quickly permeated the atmosphere to an extent proportioned to the amount exposed, rendering senseless and helpless any living thing within its influence, for a period of from fifteen to twenty-five minutes, or until the gas became so widely diffused as to lose its power. In short, its action and effect was much like that of chloroform, except that the sensibilities of man or animal were paralyzed instantly.

The professor next took from his belt a Winchester cartridge, and after some difficulty removed the lead ball, leaving the charge of powder in the shell. He then inserted an air-tight, two-grain gelatine capsule of double strength, full of the mysterious liquid, being careful not to release any of it. This capsule he forced into the shell against the powder. The last step was to place the curious missile in his Winchester so that it would be the next load under the hammer. Ward then lay down, and feigned to sleep, knowing that where he was he was safe from attack, but kept such

perfect virgil as to feel sure that the Mexican could not have passed his camp that night undiscovered.

At daybreak the professor started forward. There was nothing in his demeanor to indicate that he knew himself to be followed. After he had been in the saddle a short time he took from his pocket a small compass, which he carried in his left hand, directing the horse with his right. As he left the camp behind him he increased his pace, pushing the animal as fast as the growth of trees and brush would permit. Any one who could have watched the compass needle as to its bearings with reference to the direction the horse was moving would have concluded Ward to be traveling in a large circle. This was true, but a man following would not have suspected it, first, because of the circle's great circumference, and, second, because the mountains, or other elevations which might disclose the fact, were, at the point chosen by the professor, concealed by forests. The scientist's purpose was now apparent. He had adopted a curious strategy to gain a position to the rear of the Mexican without the latter suspecting it.

An hour's riding brought Ward to the point where he had started on his circular route, and so accurate were his calculations that he did not vary but a few feet from the trail. Dismounting, he carefully examined the ground, and as he climbed back into the saddle smiled grimly, something rare for Ward. The Mexican was ahead. Ward had found the hoof-marks of the roan. Again the scientist proceeded rapidly, yet with extreme caution. As he bent forward in the saddle and peered ahead through the silverrimmed spectacles, he presented a most grotesque appearance. He had thus traveled in the Mexican's wake more than a mile. His usually imperturbable nature was keyed up to a snapping tension, not so much through fear as in anticipation of a new experiment. Suddenly he stopped abruptly and slipped from his horse. Leading the animal from sight he hastily tied it. Then he stole forward a short distance and dropped on one knee. About fifty yards ahead of him leisurely rode the Mexican. Quickly Ward brought his Winchester into position until the muzzle hung steadily and the broad back of the Mexican filled the sights on the barrel. Then the scientist pressed the trigger and jumped to his feet.

Almost simultaneously with the report of the rifle the roan

and its rider sank to the ground. The elated Ward started to run forward, but as he advanced was seized with a feeling of giddiness and, realizing that he was approaching the sphere permeated by the powerful gas, he beat a hasty retreat. Gradually the power of the anæsthetic became so diffused as to allow him to go forward a second time. The unconscious Mexican lay with one leg pinned under his horse's body. Ward pulled him free, but only to bind him securely with a part of his own trappings. But a few minutes passed before the highwayman opened his eyes. When they met Ward's they flashed in terrible hate and as the man made an effort to rise he discovered, for the first time, that he was a helpless prisoner.

Ward nearly lost his equanimity at the outcome of affairs and at the success of his experiment. Undoing the prisoner's feet, but leaving his arms pinioned, Ward managed to lift him astride the roan and lash the highwayman's feet together under the horse's belly. Five hours later the exultant Ward entered Jalapa astride his own horse and leading behind him the roan on which sat the Mexican, tied to its back, outwitted and humiliated. The prisoner was turned over to the authorities and proved to be a notorious bandit, who for many months had terrorized the Vera Cruz country. Ward, having proved himself able to cope with all the dangers of the region, at once returned and systematically gathered all his desired specimens, and then departed for Yucatan, where the remainder of his vacation was pleasantly, safely and profitably spent.

Against the wall in the scientist's library rests a rifle. It is silver mounted and beautifully carved, with its rich ebony stock artistically inlaid with curious designs in ivory. Ward prizes it, not so much because it was once the property of a man who would have taken his life in a far-away country, but because it is a souvenir of a problem which his science solved.



### On the Turn of a Coin,\*

#### BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

OWN the corridor, walking carefully, came four hospital attendants, holding the stretcher resting on two large wheels, rolling noiselessly. The operation was over. On the stretcher lay a young woman, unconscious. Her face was beautiful, but white as the covering sheets, and her

head was wound with bandages. She breathed faintly through parted lips.

Out of the operating-room came the surgeon who had finished his work, and with him his assistants, young men in blouses and black caps, most of them wearing pointed beards. An odor of carbolic acid followed them.

"Poor girl," said one, as he watched the stretcher turn into one of the wards. "I wonder if she'll speak before she dies."

"It will be better for her assassin if she doesn't," said another.

Then they went off to various duties. Last of all came Auguste Caseau, hurrying and behindhand, as usual. He had risen late, had reached the hospital late, and had had no breakfast. Of all the medical students at the Lariboisière Hospital there was none more popular than Caseau, but the pleasures of Paris at night often made him neglect his duties of the day. In the present instance he did not know who the young woman was whom he had just seen under the knife, nor had he any idea how her skull had been crushed with such frightful wounds. All he knew was that she had remarkable beauty and was doomed to die.

He was hurrying off to a neighboring café when a stranger waiting at the door touched his arm. The man's eyes were eager, he spoke with ill-concealed excitement and seemed like one who had gone many hours without sleep.

"Tell me," he said, "did she speak?"

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Caseau shook his head, looking at the man suspiciously.

- "Can she live?"
- "God knows, the doctor took sixteen pieces of bone out of her head."
  - "Holy Mother, sixteen pieces of bone!"

Caseau was walking meantime toward the café, and the man followed him. His eagerness for information betrayed an interest in the case that argued some special knowledge, and Caseau was curious. "Will you drink?" he said, when they had taken seats at a table.

The stranger called for absinthe and drained his glass quickly. "I must ask one more question, my friend," he said. "Tell me where were the wounds on this girl's head—were they on the back?"

- "They were," assented Caseau, who had ordered his breakfast.
- "Were there none in front, none on the forehead nor on the face?"

Caseau shook his head. "There were none."

- "How strange," muttered the man. "She was facing him when . . ."
- "Facing whom?" asked Caseau sharply, and the question seemed to bring the man to his senses.
- "Pardon me; I forgot that you do not know. I have been through so much for the last twelve hours that I am dazed. Do you believe in occult things, hallucinations and so on?"

Caseau was only in his second year, and the lectures on hallucinations did not begin until the third, so he answered guardedly.

- "That depends," he said, with an air of holding knowledge in reserve. He questioned with his eyes, and for the first time appeared sympathetic. The man ordered another absinthe.
- "I will tell you about it," he said. "I shall go mad unless I tell some one. In the first place, let me assure you that usually I am the most matter-of-fact man in Paris; I never get angry, I never get excited, but last night—" He paused and a little shiver ran over him.
  - "But last night," repeated Caseau encouragingly.
  - "It was about nine o'clock, and I was walking up the Rue

Fontaine with my hat off because the night was hot, and whistling because business had been good. You see I am a grocer down on the Street of the Four Winds. When I reached the corner of the Rue Breda, where I live, I stopped in a little cake-shop to buy some sweets for my wife. Then I hurried upstairs, two at a time, for I was eager to see her. Our apartment is on the fifth floor, looking out on the Rue Fontaine, and a balcony runs along the windows where my wife keeps flowers growing. It is a nice place to sit summer evenings, and I expected to find her there.

"Imagine my surprise, then, on opening the door, to find the apartment quite dark, except for the glow of the little night-lamp from the bedroom at the end of the corridor. And instead of seeing my wife come running to meet me, all smiles, I found absolute stillness in the place, stillness and darkness. In that moment, as I stood with the door ajar, and my hand on the knob, there came over me a creeping sense of fear, something I had never known before. It seemed to me that some great danger was lurking in the air, that some evil presence was near me. So strong was this feeling that, acting on the first impulse, I stepped back on to the landing outside and closed the door behind me.

"In an instant, however, my reason reasserted itself, and ashamed of my weakness I opened the door again, closed it sharply behind me, and double-locked it. Then hanging my hat on a hook at one side I started down the corridor. There was a distance of twenty feet that I had to traverse before reaching the bedroom, and I assure you that I never in my life endured such torture as I felt in taking those few steps. At first it was a fear for myself that held me back, but presently this was superseded by a horrible sickening fear for my wife. I saw it was she whose life was threatened, or had been threatened, for the conviction grew upon me that I had come too late. When I was half-way down the corridor, I clutched the wall with one hand and pressed the other to my brow, which was throbbing with frightful fancies. They say that drowning men see strange things as death comes on, but no drowning man, I am sure, ever saw a vision more distinct than came to me there of my poor wife."

By this time Caseau was listening intently.

"She is a beautiful woman, I beg you to believe, and I saw her

as plainly as I see you now, stretched on the bed, her face as lovely as ever in its setting of dark hair, only very pale. But there were wounds, dreadful wounds, on the back of the head, from which the pillow was stained crimson.

"But this was only the vision?" put in Caseau.

"Yes, a vision. God grant you may never have one. I was unable to move, afraid to speak. I seemed rooted to the floor.

"Finally my will conquered, and I staggered into the bedroom. With an awful fascination my eyes sought the bed, around which were drawn the red curtains. On the side toward me, on a little table, burned the night lamp. Everything in the room seemed as usual—there was no sign that ill had come—yet I cannot tell you with what feelings I stepped forward and drew apart the curtains. My wife lay there apparently sleeping, her lovely face turned toward me, and the pillow beneath her head as white as her hand that pressed it. With a sigh of relief I sank into a chair. At that moment I was startled to hear, behind the curtains, a gasping sob, and then a burst of hysterical weeping. Hurrying to the bedside I besought my wife to be calm, assuring her that I was there to protect her.

"At last my wife recovered sufficiently to explain her fright as well as she was able to do so. She had dined alone about six o'clock and about seven had given Amandine, our servant, permission to go out for the evening. Then she had spent a little time tidying up the apartment, and about half-past seven had settled down to read in the room where we have our library. This room faces on the Rue Breda. In front of this room there is a short stretch of balcony, which ends in an iron partition that separates it from the balcony of the house adjoining, which is No. 4. It would be possible for a man to climb over this partition and step from one balcony to the other.

"As my wife read she must have dozed, for presently, although her back was turned to the window, she seemed to see a man of large stature standing on the balcony outside and peering into the room. This man had bushy red hair and eyes of the palest blue—eyes that frightened her. Presently he withdrew stealthily, climbed over the partition, and peered into a window of No. 4. Once again he drew back, seemed to hesitate, smiled with a grim

humor and noiselessly drawing a coin from his pocket spun it in the air and caught it deftly in his open palm. Then moving closer to the window for better light he nodded, put the coin back in his pocket and forthwith entered the room where my wife sat, passing easily through the long, door-like halves of the window, that were swung wide open.

"Spellbound, my wife watched the man, who paid no heed to her, but made his way at once to the bedroom, she following in mortal terror. Approaching the bed he noticed that its curtains were drawn and paused a moment, casting his eyes about him as if in search for something. Near the fireplace lay a heavy brass poker which he picked up, returning with it to the bedside. Breathless my wife watched as he put aside the curtains. A woman lay there sleeping, with her face turned away, but my wife thought it was herself. She saw the man lift the poker as if to strike, at which the woman lying in the bed started and looked toward him. At this my wife's terror burst the bonds in her throat and she cried aloud.

"Of course it was only fancy, a dream, if you like, something that was not real, for the next instant she was alone in the room. But the effect was most distressing. Do what she would she could not drive from her mind the face of that tawny-haired assassin, with his pale blue eyes. It seemed to her that he was still near her with murderous purpose. In vain, lamp in hand, she searched the apartment, and tried to convince herself that nothing was there; in vain she closed and bolted the windows opening on the balcony. That sense of nameless fear pursued her still; and whichever way she turned it seemed to her that an enemy was crouching behind her, waiting his chance to spring or strike.

"Finally she went to bed, hoping that sleep would give her some relief; but she could not sleep, she could not get her thoughts out of the morbid channel in which they were running. So, anxious, restless, sick at heart, she had waited for me to come, and my coming, alas, brought her only added terrors, for my strange delay at the door, my opening it twice and closing it, then my long pause and silence in the corridor, instead of the cheery greeting I was wont to give her, made her sure that it was not I at all, but some intruder come to do her harm, some prowling assailant of the

night, perhaps the very man whose eyes and fiery hair had frightened her so in the vision.

"Then, realizing that it was her husband who was there, the man who loved her, and that there was no danger at all, she burst into the fit of hysterical sobbing from which I had such difficulty in calming her."

"You are preventing me from eating my breakfast, sir, with your queer story," said Caseau. "And besides, I can't see what it has to do with the young woman who has just been operated on."

"Let me finish," said the man, "let me finish. We hardly slept all night, for our fears persisted in spite of the knowledge that no harm had befallen. I made matters worse by foolishly telling my wife of the fright I had experienced on entering the apartment, and my vision of the murdered woman. You will remember particularly that the wounds were on the back of the head, and you tell me that is where they really were."

"That is where they were on the woman in the hospital, but she is not your wife?"

"No, thank heaven, but you know who she is?"

"Not I," said Caseau. "I got in too late to learn any details."

"She is Marie Gagnol, who occupied the apartment adjoining ours in No. 4, Rue Breda."

"My God!" exclaimed Caseau.

Just then one of the other students came in from the hospital. "She's dead," he said. "She never spoke. But they are going to try an important experiment on her. Dr. Rosseau thinks she closed her eyes with fright at the very moment when she saw the murderer, and never opened them since. He's going to test his new apparatus for getting the last image recorded on the retina. If he succeeds it will be a new triumph for the hospital and for science."

"Gentlemen," said the stranger impressively, "if the doctor's experiment succeeds I believe on my soul that it will also be a triumph for justice."

That afternoon Dr. Rosseau made the experiment, with brilliant success; it was one of the first demonstrations of the possibilities of colored photography. Registered in the sensitive film of the dead woman's eyes, was found the distinct image of a man of un-

usual size, who clutched in his hands an uplifted poker. The man's hair was red, his eyes a pale blue.

Two months later such a man died under the knife on the Place de la Roquette. He had been arrested, convicted and condemned on the sole evidence of a pair of lifeless eye-balls, supported by the testimony of a woman who had never seen him except in a vision. On the eve of his execution he made a full confession. He stated that the murder was a chance crime, prompted only by greed. He had reached the balcony running in front of Nos. 2 and 4 Rue Breda by using a rope hung from the roof. He declared that for about five minutes while he was standing outside he had hesitated whether to enter the apartment of No. 2 or No. 4. He had rested the decision on the turn of a coin.



### The Transposition of Stomachs.\*

BY CHARLES E. MIXER.

Y Dear Elliott:

Since your departure for elsewhere with your bonny bride, some two years ago, our correspondence has been of the chills and fever sort, I furnishing the chills and you the fever, intermittent at that.

During the last year I have been more delinquent than ever, partly from stress in my feelings and condition, and the remainder from a desire to throw no cloud over your very evident happiness, for in sympathy you were never bankrupt, as your friend well knows.

It was about this same time a year ago that that arch-enemy of man's comfort, dyspepsia, laid his grip on me, and, may the plague take him, continued to tighten it. I resorted, of course, to our friends the doctors — of whom I had many, and many of whom you know — too many, no doubt, and too often, and the help I got was nil.

You have often done me great honor in terming me the most artistically finished article of a gournet you ever saw. I never quarreled with your conception of me, and after you left even thought you fell short of the truth. You knew me a fairly genial, good-natured chap, with a keg of humor always on tap to my friends, but, alas, after a while the keg ran dry and in its place stood a barrel of wormwood. I considered how long I might be allowed to remain here, or, to follow more nearly my line of thought, how long I should be compelled to. I assure you I had no wish to give up my occupation as gournet, though there seemed no help for it.

Well, one evening I sat warming my shins before my open fire, dreaming of what might have happened had I married Ethel, as

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you urged. I might have been, perhaps, the happy father of children. But this was not to be; I became instead the father of a thought, an idea or revelation, or anything you like. As I mused, my great idea grew and flourished in my mind. As you have destined yourself for the noble profession of medicine, I at once made you godfather to this creation of my brain, and now you will, no doubt, be interested to learn the details of its results, if you have not already heard of them. My idea was no less than the transposition or exchange of stomachs, in which I saw a hope for a new and healthy existence in my old rôle of gourmet. To carry out my thought I needed the help of one we both know, the distinguished surgeon, Dr. Dickson, and of another person, whom we did not know. Next morning I found myself possessed of distinctly more faith in the plan than I had the night before, which decided me. You well know of the doctor's wonderful operations, and I knew him to be the very man for this one, if such existed. I found him, and with considerable diffidence communicated my scheme. Before I had fairly finished he jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "By Jove! I believe it possible; but how can you find the other man?" I admitted that this might be difficult, but thought I knew a suitable subject. "See him," he said, "see him, and if he will consent, I will."

You know that before I retired from business, with enough to last several lifetimes, I was President of the Island Sound Steamship Company. Among the 'longshoremen I knew one Jerry Kelly, a strapping, robust, rosy-cheeked fellow, about my size and build, the picture of health and the possessor of a good wife and a big family of children. I knew him quite well, as I had often given him odd jobs when the boats were not in. The next evening I sent for him, "as I had something for him to do." I had him shown into the dining room, where the sideboard displayed a fine joint of beef, some cold cabbage, a bottle of whiskey and a few other things. I think he saw these before he did me.

- "Have you had supper, Jerry?"
- "I belave I have, sor," he said.
- "You believe you have? Well, suppose you tackle this, and then say you know you have."
  - "With great pleasure, sor."

The way he closed with that beef would have made a reputation for a tackle on a college eleven and I, looking on, green with envy, said:

- "Have you a big appetite, Jerry?"
- "So big, sor, that I niver yet saw the end of it."
- "Is it always with you, Jerry?"
- "I niver yet lost sight of it," he mumbled with his great mouth full of beef.
- "Just one more question, Jerry. Do you ever have a feeling of distress after your meals?"
- "Yis, sor, I do that, for it's the big meals I like and it's the small one I do be gettin' some days; it's after thim that I have that same feeling of dishtress that there wasn't more of it."
- "I reckon you are sound, Jerry, in stomach and wit. Don't spare the grog, for I have a big job for you to consider and no mistake."
  - "What is it, sor?" he asked.
- "Well, Jerry, you have a fine stomach, and I haven't. I have plenty of money and you haven't. I propose to exchange."
  - "Aw, don't be joshin' me, sor!" said he.

And then I told him of the wonderful things Dr. Dickson had done, and how I thought this could be accomplished, and no damage to either. Would you believe it? He seemed to fall in with my idea.

- "It's a rishky job when all's said, and what is it worth, sor?"
- "Twenty-five thousand," said I.
- "Whew!" said he, "and how about Nora, and the children, if ——"
- "Jerry," said I, "here it is; before we start with the Doctor I make my will, in which I leave you twenty-five thousand dollars, in case I go; if I live, I pay it to you; if you go I pay it to Nora; do you see?"
- "Faith I do, sor, and for the sake of Nora and the kids, and your faith in your big doctor, begorra I'll try it, so I will," and with that we took hands and a big noggin to our success, and parted.

Well, when the Doctor heard all this he was game, and carried out his part at the Park Hospital before a select few of the pro-

fession. As to the result — well, I am writing this and shall soon resume my rôle of gourmet.

Jerry is also all right all round, though he says he has no appetite, poor chap, and is cheerful as a sparrow. No wonder, from his standpoint, for, attend to this! Directly he got about he went to a friend of his, even tougher than he was, and succeeded in driving the same identical bargain with him for five thousand! So, if all goes well, Jerry will have a better stomach than he ever had, and twenty thousand in the bank. What will eventually become of my old stomach, I can't at present tell; perhaps I may be able to inform you later.



# the Black Cat

#### A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 56.

### MAY, 1900.

5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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### The Tarantula.\*

BY ANNA MCCLURE SHOLL.



HE late afternoon sun flung lengthy shadows along the crowded city street. On one side the tall buildings were bathed in a deep red glow; in the semi-obscurity of the other the hurrying throngs of people seemed like dream phantoms in the mellow, dusty light.

Alone amid the crowd and bustle there stood quietly on a corner, apparently waiting for a car, a young woman of unusual appearance. To Stephen Klendenning, whose attention was attracted by the slender figure, she could not have created a stronger impression of solitude — of isolation — had she been Millet's "Shepherdess," alone in a far-off field. Strangeness surrounded her as an aura — yet he could not at once tell in what it consisted. She was conventionally gowned in a dark cloth suit of tailor cut, relieved only by a vest of creamy lace. Her velvet hat was as unobtrusive as her gown. The face beneath it was of unusual beauty, though not of a type to appeal to the rank and file of those who were hurrying by. She had the Burne-Jones contour, the virginal figure, the long, sweet curve of the cheek-bone

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from ear to chin, the sensitive, clear-cut mouth, the far-sighted, wistful eyes. As in the Burne-Jones women, there was a sense of strangeness about her, blended in Klendenning's mind with a sense of unreasoning fear. She actually inspired him with terror, and as he drew nearer to her, he perceived that his unusual sensations had sprung from a fearful cause. He saw, half-hidden among the folds of the lace vest, the hairy outline of a great tarantula. If he had seen the animal sprawled across the face of the Sistine Madonna he would have been less shocked. The old sick terror of his boyhood sent the blood to his heart, blended with a sense of outrage that the Thing should be upon her. He knew that he must remove the creature, but how to accomplish what to most men would be a trifling, if disagreeable, act? To him it was well-nigh a sundering of soul and body. Struggling with his repulsion an instant, Stephen's desire to save the girl from shock got the better of his cowardice, and drawing out his handkerchief he approached her. He feared now, lest she should become aware of the hideous presence before he could remove it.

She checked him.

"I appreciate your chivalry," she said in a quiet tone, "but I am perfectly aware of the presence of the spider. I thought I had covered it completely with the lace."

She readjusted some folds, and Klendenning saw a terrible crawling underneath, a convulsion of hairy limbs — then a receding darkness — then only a deep shadow in the creamy meshes.

She looked up. Their eyes met. The astonished terror in Klendenning's met no response in hers — only an acquiescent sadness.

"I thank you again," she said.

He bowed He could say nothing. He thought her insane, if he thought at all. When she had left, he wondered if the episode had really taken place, or whether it had been an hallucination—a return of one of those horrible nightmares of childhood, in which a monstrous spider enthroned itself as the King of Terrors. From earliest infancy his fear of spiders had been intense, unreasonable, esoteric. Accounted a courageous, even foolhardy, boy in all adventures common to boyish enterprise, he betrayed in the presence of a spider a terror unworthy of an hysterical girl. As he grew older he had learned to disguise this birth-antipathy to

some degree, and took pains to display his remarkable physical courage in other ways.

But now the old horror seemed to return with redoubled strength. His adventure haunted him for months afterward. So ugly and fantastic, so vivid was the impression, that he never saw a jabot of lace on a woman's dress without an instinctive look for a dark shadow somewhere in its folds. Even the Burne-Jones women in the picture galleries suggested a horror that took shape as an invisible spider, hidden somewhere in the folds of their wonderful drapery.

In the second winter after the spider episode, Klendenning was invited to dine at the house of a friend, a woman noted in artistic and literary circles for her ability to gather about her unusual types of aristocracy. One met at her house those whose peculiarities were the result of generations of cultivation, rather than of natural, unguided growth. Stephen found the majority of the guests gathered in the drawing-room unknown to him, and knew that, with the exception of the woman whom he was to take in to dinner, they would probably remain so, it being a rule of the hostess never to introduce her guests.

He was wondering with whom he was foreordained to spend three hours in conversation, when he saw, seated alone, the young woman who for months had been the centre of a fantastic memory—the wearer of the Tarantula. In evening dress she was even more beautiful than Stephen's memory of her. Her gown of misty brown gauze was cut to show her delicate, but perfectly formed neck and shoulders. At her breast were some large purple violets. No other ornament was visible, but a sense of fear and strangeness chilled Klendenning as a breath from the tomb. He knew, or rather, felt, that under those abundant chiffon ruffles a dark shadow lurked. The girl herself bore about her the atmosphere of isolation. Among the brightly dressed, nonchalant women, she seemed a lovely alien, under some spell of strangeness and melancholy. There was no touch of hauteur in her manner—rather an indescribable humility.

Klendenning said to his hostess:

<sup>&</sup>quot;Will you tell me who your very beautiful, very strange guest is?"

"I thought you would find her!" was the reply, accompanied by a little smile. "You are always attracted to strange, unhappy, far-off souls. She is Eleanor Maitland, and you are to take her in to dinner."

The sudden change in Stephen's face must have shown itself the old whiteness that used to shame him among his playmates for his hostess asked quickly: "Have you any objection?"

- "I think I have told you," he said, "of my constitutional horror of spiders?"
  - "You have met before, then or some one has told you?"
  - "We have met before on a street corner."
  - "And you saw Something?"
  - "Yes, I saw It."

Her usual light, careless manner dropped from the hostess, and she said earnestly:

- "Klendenning, if you only knew, you would be pitiful, and and the creature is hidden."
  - " Is she crazy?"
- "No, poor heart! better, perhaps, if she were. Klendenning, as you are a knight chivalrous, don't refuse to take that child in to dinner to-night. I had such difficulty in getting her here at all! There is no other man who can give her the pleasure you can—who can appreciate her as you can."

These well-deserved words of flattery would probably have had no effect, but Stephen had turned to look again at Miss Maitland, and the deep melancholy on her beautiful face touched him. Her eyes, wide and wistful, seemed to look beyond the scene before her. He again faced his hostess: "Please take me to her!"

"Thank you," she said. "It is worthy of you, Klendenning."

When he had actually committed himself, the old horror at once took possession of him. He imagined the worst. The hideous spider, hidden in the chiffon of her dress, might, by some accident, emerge at dinner. If it did, he knew not what insanity of antipathy might come upon him — upon him, a grown man, with a reputation for rare courage and coolness. He opened his lips to recall his words, but the hostess was already leading the way, and Miss Maitland had seen them. There was nothing to do but fol-

low, and in another moment he was bowing before the strange beauty, and they were left together.

"I recognize you, Mr. Klendenning. We have met before," she said.

"And I you, Miss Maitland. It is a surprise — and pleasure — to find that Mrs. Coates is a mutual friend."

Miss Maitland smiled, but her mind seemed to be on a serious subject, and she broke in upon his last words:

"Forgive my abruptness," she said with a certain pleading note in her voice, "but before we are too deep in the conventionalities, Mr. Klendenning, let me say that I understand perfectly what the birth-antipathy to a spider is—"

"I am sorry I have betrayed myself," he interrupted.

"It was no unmanly betrayal — but I know the whiteness. I have seen it often in one who — who is dead. May I say that I appreciate your chivalry in consequence, as I appreciated it at our first meeting? To-night," she added, "It is with me, but It is fastened in the ruffles — beyond escape."

She said the last words painfully, as if forced to speak of some loathsome physical infirmity, and Klendenning knew then that, whatever her reason for carrying a tarantula about her person, she did not do it from mere eccentricity. He was convinced that there was a deeper, stranger, more mysterious cause.

When dinner was announced, and Klendenning gave Miss Maitland his arm, and felt the nearness of her presence, the terror again stole through him, as a spectre through a house in which it claims a past, but he had another fear now—lest she should perceive this ghost and suffer with him, because for him. By a strong effort of will he drove from his mind the haunting horror of the spider, and began a conversation on art, for which an exhibition then taking place afforded the pretext. He found her an appreciative and cultured talker and listener, understanding even his very silences—the entire vocabulary of the unspoken language. Her charm increased upon him every moment, and when from pictures the talk drifted to music, he knew, more from what she left unsaid than from her conversation, that she herself had had the mystic initiation of the artist into its marvels. He found that, like himself, her love for the classics was accompanied by a

passion for wild and melancholy folk-airs, old and strange dance music, cadences that had floated down through many careless generations.

As she spoke she lost the expression of haunting melancholy that seemed habitual, and only once did Klendenning remember that there was Something under the chiffon at her breast. She had leaned back in her chair, had touched for a moment, as she looked down upon them, the violets in her corsage. His eyes rested involuntarily upon the soft gauze ruffles. In the shadows they threw he saw a deeper spot of shadow that moved a little, that seemed to crawl and quiver. For a moment, in a sudden revulsion of feeling, the woman was as repellant to him as the Thing that she carried about her. For a moment only—then the appeal in her eyes conquered. He came back to her a suitor with a plea for pardon in his voice.

Later, when he took leave of her, he begged that he might be permitted to call. At first she hesitated, as might a child not quite sure of the limit of its privileges, and then she said simply that he would be welcome. He returned to Mrs. Coates with impetuous questions, which she would not answer. "Unless you hear Eleanor Maitland's story from her own lips," she said, "you will think her mad. Do you believe," she added, with a little smile, "that her fascination will overcome your horror of spiders? I hope so!"

Two evenings later, Stephen Klendenning sought the old house, in an old-fashioned square, where Eleanor Maitland lived. It looked dark and gaunt and forgotten, though clearly defined in the electric light that fell full upon it. As he ascended the steps he had a sudden horror of the place, as an abode of something more than melancholy thoughts and strange emotions. An impulse to turn back seized him, but the remembrance of a beautiful face held him to his purpose. He would see her at least once again.

Klendenning was shown into what had been a library. The walls were yet lined, from floor to ceiling, with books, books long undisturbed, and as sombre as the heavy black oak tables and tall chairs, fantastically carved. Marble busts on tall pedestals gleamed ghostly from dim corners. It seemed to him like the room of one long dead. Only in one portion of it did he

see a trace of life — of a woman's presence. Near a large fireplace where a cheerful wood fire burned, was an open piano.
There were bowls of violets and white roses upon it, and above it
hung a noble St. Cecilia of Domenichino. One of the old library
chairs was drawn near the fire, but over it, hiding its dusky
leather, was flung a voluminous scarf of fantastic coloring — a
spot of fierce light in the surrounding gloom. Near the chair
was a round table covered with books of modern aspect.

Klendenning awaited Miss Maitland nervously. He found himself watching the shadows, as if a great thing with hairy legs might steal out from them and be close upon him before he could discover its dun presence. Again he regretted that he had come; he was oppressed with a sense of approaching evil — the malady of the spider was again upon him.

As he stood restless, uncertain, by one of the tall oak chairs, Miss Maitland emerged from the shadows, gowned in pure white. Her abundant hair, massed upon her shapely head, was confined by a ribbon that brought out the wonderful blue of her eyes. But upon her breast, extended in a wide, horrible circle, sharp and distinct upon the snowy lawn, was the Tarantula! The legs, no longer doubled up and confined, spread out, hairy and terrible. Klendenning did not see but felt the presence of eyes. He knew the great animal could see!

Involuntarily he drew back as his hostess stretched out her hand. Why had she done this terrible thing? Why had she obtruded this sickening barrier between them? Had she no respect for the connate weakness to which he had confessed—no mercy, after all she had said?

As simply as a child might speak, she answered his unspoken questions: "When it is not on me," she said, "it is about the room. I wanted you to know at least where it was among these shadows."

She smiled, but the smile was to Klendenning heartbreaking. On the instant, upon impulse, he asked the question he had meant to keep till he had won her confidence, if that time ever came:

"We are almost strangers, Miss Maitland," he cried, "can you trust me — can you trust me enough to tell me why you carry that awful thing about you?"

"I do trust you," she said in a low voice, "I think I have shown you that by allowing you to come here, but I cannot trust myself to tell you now — I don't think I can trust myself to talk at all. Must we talk? Will you not play to me instead — for a little while? Mrs. Coates has told me that you are a musician by nature and the grace of God!"

Miss Maitland smiled as she spoke the last words, on which she lingered a little, and seated herself in the chair by the fire, as though certain that Klendenning would comply. In this she was right, and her visitor was certainly one of those on whom the divine gift has been bestowed. Though designed for the law, he had received the best musical education that money could procure, to which his passion for music had almost compelled him, despite his father's wishes.

He went at once to the piano, and with his hands upon the keys looked a moment at the picture before him. Miss Maitland sat in the soft firelight, holding a black-feathered fan between her face and the glow. The Tarantula had left her breast, and was crawling lazily downward toward her knee. Stephen watched the Thing, fascinated. He wondered if she would allow It to leave her — if she would become absorbed in the music and forget. She became aware of his silence and turned to him.

- "What shall I play?" he asked.
- "Do you know the last movement of Weber's sonata in E minor?" she replied.
- "The Tarentalla movement?" The surprise in his voice again challenged her.
- "The Tarentella music, when I am in this mood, is like healing to me," she said. "I love its wild and melancholy phases, with the alternate gaiety as wild and sometimes as melancholy."

Klendenning began the last movement of the sonata, and gave himself up to its influence. As he played the music, as it has seldom been played, he watched Eleanor Maitland. She sat motionless, her beautiful face, in the shadow of the great fan, lit with some strange thought, her dress rosy-white in the glow of the burning logs. Upon her knee, in sharp outline, lay the great spider of Apulia, as motionless as his mistress. In the wilder passages of the music, Klendenning noticed a quivering of the ex-

tended legs, but as he passed into the melancholy phase this ceased, and the animal seemed a part of the white gown, a hide-ous embroidery made by cunning fingers, guided by a distracted brain.

When the sonata was finished, he passed without comment to the Tarantella from Auber's "Muette de Portici." Conversation would have been impossible. They were together with the Spider, and the world was shut out. Klendenning's heart was torn with conflicting emotions that found most congenial outlet in the wild and haunting music of the Tarantula dances, with their abrupt transitions, delirious movement, bizarre gaiety and profound sadness. He played on and on, while Eleanor listened as one enchanted and the great Spider lay motionless.

At the close of a movement of singular wildness, Miss Maitland held up her hand with an entreating gesture.

"You have put so much of yourself into the music," she said, "that you must be weary. Come and sit opposite to me. Perhaps — perhaps — now I can speak."

He drew a chair opposite to her, but found himself watching the Tarantula as if it were a secret enemy, plotting diabolical mischief. In those curved, tense legs there seemed the power to leap and spring. He wondered if the creature felt his antipathy and was biding its time to revenge itself.

- "Perhaps now I can speak," she repeated, with a certain wist-fulness in her voice.
  - "Do not speak unless you wish to," he said.
- "I do wish it," she said slowly, "for I know that, unlike the majority, you will not think me mad. You have put your soul into that music, and I know you understand what a soul can suffer!"

They were silent for a few moments, and then, with a certain effort, Miss Maitland began to speak:

"My mother died in my infancy. I was the second child and daughter. My sister was seven years older than I. Even as a little girl, they tell me, she was very beautiful, with an indefinable grace and charm of manner. She had, as far as I could see, but one characteristic that disturbed the harmony and peace of her nature — she had a birth-antipathy to spiders that amounted

almost to insanity. The sight of one would produce a physical sickness, and she suffered a nervous shock out of all proportion to the cause. In all other respects she was perfectly free from morbidity or nervousness.

"As I grew into childhood, there sprang up between us a passionate attachment. I looked up to her as to a little Queenmother, and she regarded me at once as her little sister and her baby. We rarely quarrelled and were, as a rule, inseparable. Our father idolized us both.

"As the years went on, Elise grew into as sweet and fair a maidenhood as was ever pictured. She began to treat me more as a little girl, but with a winsomeness that left my pride untouched. Since she had entered into her new dignities I regarded her as my own Princess, to be loved and adored with a certain state. But I did not want others to love her too much. I was fiercely jealous of her friends. It was when she was eighteen, and about to make her début in society that something — diabolical — happened."

Miss Maitland had grown as white as her gown. Her distress was so intense that Klendenning begged her not to go on.

"But I must go on. About this time my father, who had quite a passion for studying the habits of insects, had secreted in his room a huge tarantula, which had been sent him by a friend, from Apulia. Knowing that I had no fear of spiders, he allowed me to see the creature, but he cautioned me that on no account was I to tell Elise of its presence in the house. He scarcely needed my promise, I thought. I was passionately fond of Elise. But the next day. Oh, that next day!

"I had expected to go with her to a matinée, had dreamed of the pleasure for a week, had set the whole desire of my stormy heart upon it — for I always went to extremes in joy or pain. At the last minute a young man who was in love with Elise appeared at the house after a six months' absence in the West. When he had gone, Elise came to my nursery, looking flushed and happy. She put her arms about me and told me that he was going with her instead, because he could only be in town a few days. She said, in her pretty, pleading voice, that I should go wherever I wished with her, next week, to make up for my disappointment. She drew me close to her and kissed me.

"I jerked myself from her arms and ran and hid myself. Jealousy and bitter disappointment made a little raging demon of me. I hated Elise. I hated him. I had but one thought—to revenge myself—and I thought of the tarantula. How can I tell you the rest? I went to my father's laboratory, took the box that held the spider, and stole to the room where Elise sat at her desk, absorbed and happy. I let the animal escape onto her dress, and then said, 'Look, Elise!'

"She went into madness and she never emerged. Within the year she died, after an illness that had hideous characteristics. I found her gone when I came out of the long illness into which I had been thrown by the sight of her sufferings - by the realization of what I had done. I found myself literally the murderer of my sister. I had killed her in her youth, in her beauty, in her young joy. My father never forgave me - or, at least, he never saw me nor spoke to me again, if he could avoid it. After his death, which happened in my fourteenth year, I resolved upon my everlasting punishment. I had killed Elise on the threshold of life and love. I resolved that I would cut myself off from life and love also. What I had deprived her of, I would never know. I would isolate myself by means of the creature that had unsettled her reason and sent her to her death, that I might have before me a perpetual reminder of my crime - of the killing hate that the crime stood for. I had myself no horror of spiders - the punishment would lie in the barrier that a great spider would put between me and that world of youth and gaiety upon which Elise was just about to enter.

"My friends and guardians thought me mad when I secured my first tarantula and kept it about me, but they had little authority, my own act had alienated them, and so they preferred to drop away and leave me to myself, all but my father's sister, who shares this home with me now. That is all. Do you think, Mr. Klendenning, that you will ever care to come to me again?"

The humiliation in her voice seemed more than Stephen Klendenning could bear. He had an impulse to go over to her, to take her hand, to plead as a suitor might for her friendship — but the fear of the Spider was too great upon him. He hated himself for his cowardice, yet, because he was a coward in this one thing,

he could not speak the words that rose to his lips: "Hate brought the Tarantula to you; only Love can take it away." Instead he framed the cold, conventional sentence:

"If you will permit me to come it will be at once my pleasure and my privilege."

Eleanor Maitland sighed a little wearily. She seemed to Stephen like one waiting a long delayed message from God.

In the weeks that followed they were often together, and when they were not the thought of Eleanor in her mystic isolation was rarely absent from Stephen's mind, shut out from the world and its interests, from everything but that ideal world of the poets and musicians which was both her solace and her pain. He avoided at first all poems that dwelt upon love, upon the simple, natural lives of happy folk, but later, when his passion of love for Eleanor grew in strength, he turned instinctively to the music and the poems that could interpret his feeling.

Yet his love for her was not altogether triumphant, though she seemed to take a wistful happiness in his impassioned themes—it struggled continually with his antipathy for the great Spider. Familiar as he now was with the sight of it, its horror still lingered with him and checked the words of love that sprang to his lips. His physical consciousness of the repulsive creature overcame the spiritual attraction that was drawing him nearer and nearer to its owner.

The struggle was a long one, but love conquered at last. They were together one winter evening. He had been playing to her the wonderful "Frühlingsrauschen" of Sinding—Spring music full of passion, of coming wonder. When he had finished he rose, in response to an irresistible impulse, and went over to her. Something in his face must have told her what he was about to say, for she also rose and put out a protesting hand.

"Eleanor," he cried, "I love you! Nothing can come between us."

As his arms were outstretched to take her, the Tarantula-devil seemed aware of his approach, for it reared, and the hairy limbs quivered in a sort of excitement. But he scarcely noticed it—seven demons in spider shape could not have kept him from her then. But she—she herself drew back in a kind of horror:

"Stephen, I cannot."

The utter misery in her voice emboldened Klendenning. He thought that she would yield.

"Eleanor, I love you — you love me. Say that you love me, sweet, and let me take you out into God's sunlight, away from this horror. You have expiated your sin long ago — you have suffered enough. Let this agony end now, my beloved!"

Never did greater agony look out from more beautiful human eyes.

"No, Stephen, my expiation is only about to begin. Elise was just entering into love when I killed her. I am just entering into love, Stephen — O Stephen, I never dreamed that any one would come to me across this barrier — you must go back — you must go back! What have I to do with love? I forfeited love long ago!"

She began to sob, tearless sobs that seemed to cause her physical agony — sobs more piteous than a rain of tears. Klendenning went over and knelt beside her where she had sunk upon the divan. He put his arms about her and drew her passionately to him, whispering the mad things that lovers say — the words of the divine unreason.

He scarcely knew that the Tarantula had bitten him, though he had felt the clinging of something soft upon his hand, and then a dart like fire through his veins.

But Eleanor had seen, and had torn the dreadful Spider from him, and her cry of terror told him what had happened. They both started to their feet and the spider quivered upon the floor, stunned, apparently, by the violence with which the girl had flung it down.

- "The bite is poisonous," she cried, "and it bit you in hate. O Stephen, is this the return I give you for your love?"
- "My love is stronger than its hate, Eleanor, it will overcome the poison."

She raised his hand to her lips, putting them over the wound.

"You would draw the poison from me, beloved?" he cried. "When you love me enough you will put the poison from your-self!"

The sickness from the Tarantula's bite was sharp, but short, and Klendenning let Miss Maitland know nothing of it. He did not seek her again for many weeks. He desired to test her love—not to gratify a masculine instinct—but he felt that if she only loved enough the Spider would become repellant to her. He waited anxiously for a psychical change as subtle as the most delicate chemical transmutation. Would the power of Love overcome the power of the Tarantula?

At the end of the bitter March, Miss Maitland sent Klendenning a note, in which she said that she was about to accompany her aunt, who had not been well, to a watering-place. She said nothing of her feelings, and did not ask Stephen to come to her, but he felt that he must seek her that very night. He resolved, as once before, that he would cross a chasm of hell to reach her—that he would make one supreme appeal to her in the name of Love.

He found her alone in the great library, seated before the fire. Near her upon the floor was the Tarantula. He came in unannounced, and before she was aware of his presence he had time to see how wan her face was. She seemed lost in troubled thought. The struggle was not yet over.

"Eleanor!"

She looked up. For a moment her eyes shone with a wonderful light. He could find no word to say to her, but bowed over her hand and kissed it.

"Stephen," she said simply, "I am glad that you have come. Will you sit down and talk to me?"

"No, dear," he answered, "there is nothing I can put into words. May I play to you?"

"Yes, but - but not the Tarantula music."

"No, dear, not that."

Had his hour of triumphant love come at last? Klendenning trembled as at the approach of an overwhelming joy. For a moment his fingers could not find the keys. Then love swept through him as the very spirit of genius. He began to play the simplest music of the heart, passing into deeper and more passionate melody, from passion to passion more ideal, more spiritual, as in a triumphal progress of love. He played as he had never

played before — as he might never play again. He put into that music the whole of his life — the whole of a deathless love.

As he played he watched the face of Eleanor. Emotion after emotion swept over it, as waves of light sweep onward toward the dawn. Would they stand at last together, in the sweet peace of that new day?

He had forgotten the Tarantula, but some powerful influence drew his eyes from the sweet face to the fearful Spider. It had crawled upon her knee, but she was unaware of its presence. Yet the creature seemed to Klendenning at this moment not only self-conscious, but struggling to express its malignity—it seemed to be about to spring. Stephen felt convinced that the cord of sympathy attaching it to its mistress had been severed at last—that it was now in the full exercise of its savage and virulent nature. He rose quietly, went to Eleanor's side and threw his handkerchief over the creature. She watched him in silence as he raised the window and threw the Tarantula out upon the still lingering snow, in which he knew the exotic spider could exist but a very short time.

When Stephen returned, Eleanor had risen. Upon her face was a new light, the realization of a great deliverance. She went to him in silence, and in silence they clung together. The quiet night was all about them like a benison. They were alone with their perfect love.





## The Black Cat \$5,100 Story Contest

In announcing the result of the Prize Story Competition which closed March 31, the publishers desire to express their appreciation of the extraordinary interest taken in the contest on all sides. They wish at the same time to congratulate the hundreds of thousands of readers of THE BLACK CAT upon the excellence of the stories secured for its pages. As in previous competitions, the result proves the correctness of the belief upon which The Black Cat was founded and upon which its success has been achieved — the belief that the art of story writing is not confined to any section or any class of the intelligent people of such a country as this that it is not an accomplishment possessed solely by a favored few whose names have become "household words," but that, when furnished with an adequate incentive in the form of prompt, liberal compensation, and assured of simple justice, there are in every community, bright men and women capable of cleverly telling a fascinating story. As will be seen, the following list represents all sections and contains but four names that have appeared among the prize winners heretofore.

While in the present contest \$4,200 was offered for stories, the sum of \$5,100 has been paid for the following reason: Two prizes of \$200 were offered, but four stories of those submitted were deemed equally worthy of such a prize. The sum was therefore doubled and \$800 instead of \$400 was paid—\$200 for each. And while three prizes of \$150 were offered, four stories were deemed equally worthy of such a prize, for which reason \$150 was paid for each. Again, the writers of six stories unsuccessful in the competition received \$350 for them, thus making the total sum paid

### \$5,100, instead of \$4,200.

While the following men and women, as well as hundreds of others in all parts of the world whose names have appeared as contributors to The BLACK CAT, are living witnesses to the fairness, honesty and promptness of its dealings with writers, the July issue will contain, for the benefit of doubting Thomases, and all whom it may concern, photographic copies of the certified checks that were paid to the following prize winners.



### The Black Cat \$5,100 Story Contest

### The Successful Competitors.

S. C. Brean, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. "Margaret Kelly's Wake." \$500.00

\$500.00 C. B. LEWIS, 71 Third Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. "For The Sake of Lize."

\$300.00 MISS ELISABETH F. DYE, 1109 N. Delaware Street, Indianapolis, Ind. "Hans Kremler's Anniversary."

\$300.00 H. S. CANFIELD, Mount Sterling, Wis. "The Gaikwar's Sword."

WILLIAM J. NEIDIG, 1320 Jones St., San Francisco, Calif. "The Smile of Joss." \$200.00

\$200.00 CARROLL CARRINGTON, 431 Bartlett Street, San Francisco, Calif., "Through The Forbidden Gates."

\$200.00 CLIFFORD HOWARD, Box 36, Washington, D. C. "The Levitation of Jacob." \$200.00

E. C. Preston, Waverly, Iowa. "The Train-Hunt at Loldos."

\$150.00 MISS EDNA KENTON, Jacksonville, Ill. "The Quarantined Bridegroom."

\$150.00 H. J. W. Dam, Queen Anne's Mansions, St. James's Park, S. W., London, England. "The Diamond Drill and Mary."

\$150.00 JAMES O'SHAUGHNESSY, 61 Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Ill. "The King of The Subdivision."

\$150.00 A. ERNEST B. LANE, Murray Hill Hotel, New York, N. Y. "The Vase of The Mikado."

MRS. ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON, Pewee Valley, Ky. "The Family Skeleton's \$125.00 Wedding Journey."

\$125.00 MRS. ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD, 13 William Street, New York, N. Y. "When Time Turned."

\$125.00 MISS FLORENCE EDITH AUSTIN, Woodstock, Ill. "A Bachelor Girl's Husband."

MISS JOANNA E. WOOD, The Heights, Queenstown, Canada. "A Sister to \$125.00 The Borgias."

\$125.00 H. A. FILLMORE, Forty Fort, Pa. "How David Came Home."

\$125.00 SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR., 237 Broadway, New York, N. Y. "A Delilah of The Cinder-Path."

\$100.00 F. B. WILEY, Wayne, Pa. "A Curious Courtship."

\$100.00 MISS MARY B. SHELDON, 82 W. 132nd St., New York, N. Y. "Missing." \$100.00

FRANK E. CHASE, 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass. "A Marriage of Convenience." \$100.00 PAUL SHOUP, 4 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, Calif. "The Funeral at Paradise Bar."

\$100.00 MRS. JENNIE M. CHENERY, Jamestown, N. D. "The Black Token." \$100.00 HENRY REED TAYLOR, Alameda, Calif. "The Pocket of Goat Island."

\$100.00 C. C. Newkirk, Canal Dover, Ohio. "The Music of Money."

\$100.00 MRS. FLORENCE G. TUTTLE, Hotel St. George, Brooklyn Heights, N. Y. "The French Doll's Bridal Outfit."

\$100.00 WILLIAM GUTHRIE KELLY, 254 North State Street, Chicago, Ill. Dancing Goddess."

\$100.00 DON MARK LEMON, 155 Octavia St., San Francisco, Calif. "Doctor Goldman."

In addition to the above \$4,750.00, the sum of \$350.00 was paid for the following stories, which, while unsuccessful in the competition, contain incidents that render them available: - "The Wayside Sphinx," Mrs. Mary Foote Arnold, 904 South Center Street, Terre Haute, Ind. "The Cold Storage Baby," Mrs. D. R. Lambert, Wilton, Conn. "Colonel Tobias Gligg," Miss Gertrude Henderson, 1257 W. Fourth Street, Los Angeles, Calif. "Mr. Corndropper's Hired Man," W. M. Stannard, Box 1812, Boston, Mass. "The Father of His Country," F. E. Chase, 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass. "A Thousand Dollar Job," Richard B. Shelton, 173 Warren Avenue, Boston, Mass.

The unavailable manuscripts have been returned to their authors with a copy of this announcement.

### An Unfair Exchange.\*

#### BY ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD.

CAN'T say I was frightened, but I felt chill, and my heart thumped when I saw the table, with its rubber sheet — the basins, in which I caught the gleam of steel — and the neat array of linen and knives. The room was long and bare, flooded with a blue-white light, and smelled

faintly - a sickening, sweetish smell that permeated everything.

I had elected to come to the table, rather than to be brought unconscious. I wanted to cling to my ego as long as possible to be a man to the last - for I realized that with an operation for appendicitis there comes always the great question of life and death. My twin brother, Fred, was waiting in the outer room. He alone of all the family knew my condition and the step I was about to take. Why worry the rest, and give them the anxiety of waiting for the news? I was in good hands. Dr. Jerrold was my classmate and devoted to me. I thought of all this dimly, as I lay myself out with the help of my old chum and his assistant. A black-eyed nurse flitted in and out, bringing things. The light blazed into my eyes, and the pain in my right groin was hot and torturing. I saw Dr. Jerrold raise a muzzle-like apparatus, and pour something into it - the smell of ether filled the room. I shivered a little. Another doctor entered and was greeted cheerfully.

"All ready?" he asked.

The muzzle descended gently over my face. I gagged and gasped. A cold wave swept over me.

"Breathe in," said the voice of the assistant, immeasurably above me.

Instantly a small, powerful voice at my ear repeated rapidly: "Breathe in — breathe in — breathe in — breathe in!"

<sup>\*</sup> Copyright, 1900, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

There came an explosion of light above my eyes. I gasped again, while the big voice boomed, far, far distant: "Breathe in!" And the little one at my ear took it up once more: "Breathe in — breathe in — breathe in — breathe in — n — n — !"

I began to move with excessive velocity through an atmosphere of no resistance, supported by the voice. I was a flaming meteor! I flew through space without end — masses of white star-dust wheeling beside me. The air was cold and buoyant — that other ether that dwells between the worlds. On and on we were hurled furiously! The roar of comets in their course, and the whirr of planets in their orbits becoming confused with the insistent voice that bade me breathe. I knew that if I did not obey I should fall — fall for ever; so I filled my lungs to bursting, and, as I inhaled, was impelled onward with new force.

We approached a mass of light that grew steadily. The sun! I thought. We should be attracted into it, of course, and perish! The light was too cold for the burning sun; it was white — chill white. Then I heard distantly the sound of voices — and the centre of the glare became a gigantic question mark that stretched across the heavens.

I began to slow up and to swing from side to side, like a ship at sea. The voice was gone. A deadly illness grew upon me — and the question mark became the back of a white enamelled chair. Then there was a period of pain and nausea, but a cool hand soothed my brow. I was held firmly but gently, or I should have rolled about in spite of my weakness. I began to think again — I remembered that I had been operated upon.

"Is it over?" I asked, amazed; for it seemed but a moment ago that I saw the last of the bare, white room.

"Yes," said the nurse. "Don't talk!"

I saw she had blue eyes. A strange man came in, spoke to her and looked at me. "Getting on nicely," he said. Then some remarks were exchanged about temperature and pulse.

I was slowly assorting the fragments of my consciousness. I had a pain in the old place, but of a new kind. I felt bandages and dressings. My poor racked body seemed to be trying to tell me the terrible ordeal it had been through—"when you were away"—it spoke through every miserable nerve and relaxed

muscle, as if saying: "Yes, we were always conscious — we knew. It was terrible — where did you go?" and my ego, in turn, tried to explain. I looked at my hand on the counterpane. It was changed; so small and thin. I glanced at the room. Evidently they had decided it would be best not to put me in the one I had chosen. This was probably the retreat of the doctor's wife — it was filled with womanly trifles, though all superfluous furniture had been removed. The nurse sat by me, bathing my head from time to time, and, as the sickening taste in my mouth increased, she gave me a bit of ice to cool my tongue — only a bit, but such a relief.

A twinge of agony bit at my side. "Hell!" I ejaculated. The nurse looked startled. She held my hand a moment, then took my temperature with a tiny glass thermometer she put under my tongue—nodded her head, and moved away.

The strange man came in again a little later, walked up to me and held my hand.

"How goes it, little one?" he said.

I looked surprised. "The nausea is better," I said; "but —"

"You must be very quiet, my dear; appendicitis is no joke, and though your case was a simple one — the inflammation had not extended — still you must be obedient and very still — it's hard, of course, and you'll suffer a great deal, but you are courageous."

I only half-listened. "Where," I asked, "is Dr. Jerrold?"

It was his turn to be surprised. "He is - with a case - why?"

- "Oh!" I answered. "I thought he wouldn't have gone he was so anxious about me."
- "Was he?" said the man. "Well, be quiet now like a good girl."

"Good - what?" I gasped suddenly.

He leaned over me and looked me in the face; he felt my pulse. "The ether is still on," he said, and slipped out of the room.

I put my hand to my head—vaguely—and felt a heavy braid of hair. I believe I screamed. The nurse ran to me. I waved at her frantically. "Bring me a mirror!" I commanded.

"Lie still," she said gently.

"Bring me a mirror!" I said, "or I'll get up and get it!"

She pinned me to the bed with one strong hand and rang a bell.

"Violent?" asked the man, returning. She nodded.

He came toward me and between them they held me fast and spoke soothingly. Then, to my amazement and rage, I burst into tears.

"A mirror!" I sobbed. "Bring me a mirror!" I was almost insane.

The man gave a nod of consent, the nurse left me and brought a hand-glass from the bureau.

I looked! The face I saw was that of a young girl — her black eyes flaming with excitement — her face drawn by suffering, and white, but for two scarlet spots on the cheeks. About my head — for it was mine — was a great coil of brown hair! I fainted.

When I regained consciousness, the man and the nurse were bending over me. Then followed a confused period. I was half mad, and every time I grew conscious the same horrible question — who and what was I — faced me, and threw me off my balance again. My temperature would not go down — my pulse beat wildly. The doctor finally administered opiates.

The days that followed were terrible beyond description. I could not grasp the awful thing that had happened. I doubted my sanity. But as conviction grew that I was not a victim of a delusion, but of some amazing change, I fought that theory with all the will in me. I felt trapped and cruelly abused. I could confide nothing of my trouble or I risked the insane asylum. So I fought the fearful battle out alone, and the horror of it came near unsettling my reason. Often I had recourse to touching something to make sure I was not mistaken—the coverlid, the medicine bottles, the spoons; each served as a focus for my poor wits. But the accuracy of my vision and touch, with the logical sequence of my life, convinced me finally that, whatever had happened to my soul—this body, at least, was in normal surroundings.

At last, after days of misery, I became sufficiently master of myself to begin to make an effort to discover my new personality. But the instant I asked questions my doctor and nurse became alarmed. So I took the part of silence, and they thought me better. A week or more after my operation, a strange, handsome, middleaged lady was admitted.

"Who is that?" I asked the nurse, unwarily.

She heard me, and, though evidently prepared for my affliction, it struck home.

"Don't you know me?" she begged. "Oh, Polly! Polly, dear —don't you know your mother!"

The nurse put up a warning hand, but the poor woman's distress had touched me. Since this strange and terrible thing had happened, I might as well make the best of it.

"Of course, mother," I said; "how stupid of me."

She almost cried for joy this time. The doctor came in.

- "Don't excite my patient," he said, looking over her head the while at the nurse, who smiled. His face cleared.
- "How how are they all?" I asked at a venture; for the doctor and nurse were watching me like hawks.
- "Marjie is well," said the lady. "Tom is staying with us. Your father is very tired, dear, for we've all been so anxious about you. But now that you're getting well again, he is better too. We shall all be so glad to have our dear, laughing Polly back again. Your father is looking about for a horse for you, so when you're up you can have one all to yourself."
- "Thank you," I said vaguely. "Remember me give my love to all of them." I judged Tom and Marjie to be my brother and sister, so I thought it safe to say: "Tell Tom he's a poor sort of a brother if he doesn't write me all the news. I can have a letter, can't I, Doc?"

There was a miserable silence.

My new mother said gently: "Tom is not your brother, Polly. Don't you remember?"

She picked up my left hand and held it up before me. On the third finger was a heavy, old-fashioned ring, set with a solitaire. "Good Lord!" I thought. "I'm engaged, am I—engaged to a man named Tom!" They must have seen the terror on my face. My mother's lip quivered.

"You had better go," the doctor said. "She mustn't be tired."
They left me, all but the nurse. I lay thinking. Then I

determined to take the bull by the horns.

- "Nurse," I said, "what is the rest of my name; Polly what? I can't remember."
  - "Polly Delano," she answered.
  - "And how many brothers and sisters have I?"
  - "One sister, Marjorie."
  - "And I'm engaged to Tom who? do you happen to know?"
  - "Yes, Tom Tregenna."
- "Tom Tregenna," I exclaimed excitedly. "You don't mean it? Why, I know him well!"

I saw my mistake. "I mean I remember all about him — and I had forgotten so many things."

During the days that followed I was introduced to the members of my new family, one by one, and gradually learned to navigate fairly safely through the narrows and shallows of conversation. I was so taken up mentally that my physical condition bothered me little - though I suffered from lying still so long, and the usual dressing was far from pleasant. In three weeks I was allowed to move from my bed. I was wofully weak. I, who had been the centre rush of my college team, and had kept my condition perfect since I graduated, could not move unaided, and, in the frail body I had come to occupy in some strange way, could not even lift a book. I began to see a few friends, though always carefully prepared for any condition of mind. I caught them watching me curiously. The most trying ordeal was when Tom came. He was tremulous with eagerness, yet I could see he feared the meeting - and God knows I feared it, too - but I was so glad to stand on firm ground once more that I greeted him rapturously. Then I forgot, and began in my own character:

"Tom, I'm that glad to see you — my lord, man! — but this has been a siege! Nobody can ever know what I've been through — never! — and, say, old chap, I'm rusty; what's all the news? How's Will Featherly? and what became of little Ponsonby and that Taunton girl? The club was talking of nothing else when I was taken sick."

Tom looked amazed, but answered my questions. "When did you meet Ponsonby? I did not know you knew him."

"Know him!" said I. "Why, Ponsonby and I spent a month together in Quimberley's camp in Maine."

- "You did? When?"
- "Two years ago we had splendid sport."
- "Who chaperoned?"
- "Nobody; there weren't any ladies "
- " No ladies!"
- "No. There was some talk of Mrs. Q. coming up; but we rather preferred keeping bachelors' hall."

Then Tom began humoring me. "Of course, Polly, dear" -

- "Say," I went on, "I want awfully to see Dr. Jerrold; can't you manage it? Ask what's-his-name, the Medico, to get him to come."
  - "Of course," said Tom, with a jealous look in his eyes.

I laughed aloud. "You're not going to be jealous of him, I hope," I roared in unladylike mirth.

- "Well, why are you asking for him? Dr. Benson says you asked for him almost as soon as you came out from the ether."
- "Because," I answered, "I have an idea that Jerrold will be able to help me more than any one else. Get Benson to talk me over with him."

Tom promised, and kissed me good-bye. I shall never forget it — it gave me the horrors for a week!

The next day when Benson came I pretended to sleep, for I did not want to be bothered with him; and I had discovered in my new brain a depth of innocent deceit that amazed me. The doctor and the nurse discussed me in low voices.

"The strange thing is," said Benson, "that Dr. Jerrold has an appendicitis case followed by loss of identity with a hallucination of change of sex —a combination utterly unknown before. And he tells me he operated on the same day, almost at the same hour, that we did. It's most extraordinary — and Miss Delano's insisting that Jerrold is the only man who could understand her case. It's very odd. He's coming here to-day to consult; she insists on it."

- "How's his case coming on?" asked the nurse interestedly.
- "Not well. They've had all sorts of trouble. The case to begin with was worse than ours, and when the complication arose they had all sorts of trouble. Patient was hysterical—took everything hard—begged for an imaginary family of sisters and

brothers and fiancés and things — refused to have anything to do with his own family — wouldn't listen to reason, and now he's fretting himself so, the recovery is very doubtful."

By this time I was so interested that I forgot my sham sleep and was staring, open-eyed, at the speaker.

- "Did did Jerrold operate that case at his private sanitarium?" I demanded.
  - "Yes," said the doctor, surprised.
  - "Was it he was his name Lloyd Callandar?"
  - "I believe it was."
- "O Lord!—O Lord!" I groaned, "What in thunder can I do?—and he may not recover, you say—Good heavens, man—don't say that!"—and I sat up, for I was stronger now.
- "Come, come," said Benson cheerily. "Don't feel that way. Because one case of appendicitis turns out badly it doesn't mean yours will too. You're almost well now don't work yourself up, my dear."
- "But he mustn't die!"—and here again I cried bitterly, and felt better for it. I thought in despair of what to do. I had evidently located my lost body—but the occupant was killing it—this girl soul, who had usurped my place—or, I hers. How was it? Anyway she had no right to murder me. I had done the best I could for her body; I hadn't lost her reason for her—confound her—and there she was fretting my poor sick hulk to death. I hated her!

An immeasurable pity and affection for my lost carcass invaded me, and I cried some more. Then I reasoned that I must reach her some way—must give her a star to steer her benighted and tempest-tossed course by. She must know that I had her body in charge, and would be only too glad to give it back to her—but how! There I was stumped; but then, that could be attended to later. The thing was to stop her before she killed me. Heavens! then her released ego would come and oust me, or insist on inhabiting this single shell together—and then what could we do!

I saw madness staring me in the face! but I gripped myself and waited for Dr. Jerrold. He came. He was mightily interested. I begged to see him alone. He sat beside me as I talked.

- "I hear," I said, "that you have a similar case to mine that you are treating. A loss of identity, accompanied by hallucination of change of sex."
  - "You put it well, Miss Delano."
- "May I ask you what you have been able to do for your patient?"
- "Not much," he answered. "I'm sorry to say we have a very stubborn case."
- "You know this Mr. Callandar well he is a friend of yours, is he not?"
  - "Yes; that makes it more distressing."
- "Would you recognize any of his peculiarities if you met them elsewhere? For instance, he has a knack for drawing give me a pencil, please."

He handed me one.

I tried to sketch with my former facility, but the hand I now owned would not obey. I shook my head.

"I know his style well," said Jerrold; "but what has that to do with the question?"

I was baffled. "You will be surprised," I said, "when I tell you that Callandar and I are old friends, unknown to any one. For instance, you remember the incidents of the night you spent together at Tunicliff, with young Trainor, and the confession he made when he died?" (Jerrold was startled this time.) "You think that is known to none save you and Callandar; but you see I know too."

- "But you are engaged to some one else?" I saw a suspicion dawn in his eyes, but I did not stop to care.
- "You see," I continued, "I know him well. Now, will you take a note from me to him—and not read it? It is for him alone—it may help."

Jerrold bowed in silence.

I took up the pencil and a sheet of note paper and began:

Miss Delano: — Don't trouble; I am in charge of your body. Believe me, it will all come right. Don't fret; try to accommodate yourself to your new home until we can meet and talk it over. You must first get well. Remember I hold you accountable for my body—I have done my best for yours—and you owe it to me to save mine.

From the soul in your body to the soul in mine.

I folded this extraordinary letter and directed it to myself. "There may be an answer," I added; "will you bring it to me to-morrow? And say nothing to any one, please."

He went away, and in a fever of anxiety I awaited the reply I knew would come.

Jerrold called the next day about noon.

"Your note seemed to quiet my patient wonderfully," he told me. "Here is your answer."

I tore it open; it ran:

Thank God! I thought I was mad! Then it's true—all true. I will get well, Mr. Callandar, indeed I will. I won't fret any more. I shall do all in my power to make your body sound and whole for you—and then we must find some way to exchange our egos. I could laugh, I am so happy to know I'm not insane. Write me again, and tell me how all my people are.

From the soul in your body to the soul in mine.

I wrote in answer a description of all the family and what they did and said. I dwelt upon Tom's jealousy of the doctor, and Jerrold's mystification. I told her of her new horse, of her mother's delight in my—her—rapid recovery. I told all my difficulties in assuming her position and name.

In exchange, she told me how my mother was tending her; and how Fred brought her, every day, the most extraordinary bits of gossip from my various clubs. How she was coming to have a very different idea of men in general and certain of her acquaintances in particular. I shuddered at the thought of my innocent brother and his yarns. However, she was beginning to see the humor of the situation, particularly of my troubles with Tom—that seemed to delight her immensely. She mended daily. Jerrold was almost ill himself of curiosity as to what our letters contained. That he had a notion of some intrigue—a secret marriage, perhaps—was evident. He even threw out hints that I was not treating Tom fairly.

As for Tom himself, I must own that with returning strength, a spirit of mischief possessed me to make his life a burden to him — he certainly made mine a trial. I badgered him mercilessly. I showed him by my inferences that I knew of many little trifles in his past of which his Polly might well be in ignorance. He spent a very miserable month, I fear. He often said to me sadly: "Polly, you are greatly changed," and every time I laughed.

The letters from the real Polly were a delight to me, and I grew to watch for them with more than anxiety. But, most of all, I wanted to see her. At this time I would sit for hours before the looking glass admiring the curve of my—her—lips, I mean, and the beauty of her hair. I took great care of that hair for her sake; I knew she would wish to find it well groomed and fine. Her eyes were lovely. I caught myself gazing at my reflection with lover-like intenseness till I blushed violently—which was very pretty to watch. I was charming in a white cashmere wrapper, and my hands were beautiful, though too thin and transparent now.

I got on splendidly with the family; there were occasional relapses, of course; but on the whole I did very well indeed, Polly coaching me by letter.

The day came at last when I was taken for my first drive since my illness. Polly had informed me the day before that she expected to be taken home — my home — on that day, and I managed to be driven in that direction, in hopes of seeing myself and Polly.

We met! I was in her new landau, well wrapped up in her furs. She was with Fred in a hansom. I started when I saw my old self. I was so white and thin. But lo! and behold! up came my long arm and my paw of a hand, and threw a dainty kiss at me. It was Polly, rejoicing to see her old self again. I had to laugh. I threw back my head and ha-ha'd! I made a dive at my hat to wave it—and found it fastened to my back hair with a lot of long pins. Polly almost fell over the apron of the hansom, she laughed so heartily, and Fred drew her back and looked hopelessly puzzled and anxious.

As for Tom, who was driving with me, he was hot. "I did not know that you knew Callandar, Polly; but even if you do, it's mighty bad form for both of you, let me say, to carry on like that. I wish you would remember that you are not only engaged, but engaged to be married to me!"

I awoke suddenly to realization and turned on him raging. He going to marry me!—Polly, I mean!—not if I could help it! He wasn't worthy of her, that I knew; and, well—I would not have it. Polly and I were bound by too close a tie to allow that cad of

a Tom Tregenna to come between us. I pulled off my glove in trembling haste. I dragged at the old-fashioned solitaire.

"Take it back," I said hoarsely. "The engagement is broken!"

"I won't believe it, Polly," he said, with a look in his eyes that made me feel like a brute. He took the ring and gazed at it, heart-brokenly. "It was my mother's!" he choked.

It broke me all up, but I stood my ground.

"Polly! Polly!" he urged. "You're not well — wait, think it over. You're not your true self now."

I shook my head. "I know," I answered. "But everything is changed since I was ill, everything — please don't make it hard for me."

We drove on in silence. He helped me up the steps when we reached home, and left me in charge of "Mother!"

"Was it a pleasant drive, dear?" she asked.

I nodded. "I've broken my engagement," I said bluntly, "and don't want any one to speak to me about it"—and fled.

When I reached my room—full of feminine fripperies—I gasped with relief. Polly shouldn't marry Tom anyway—but—but—what a base advantage I had taken of my tenure of her will! I hated myself while I rejoiced. I spent a restless night.

The next day came a note, this time by post, from Polly, saying:

I'm now installed in your rooms. They smell horribly of tobacco smoke and I have had to get a barber to shave you, as I didn't know how. You had a full beard, as you—I mean I—may have noticed when we met. All this by way of saying that I'll be allowed to go about soon, and if you will name a day next week, I might call and see you—think of that! We have a very great deal to say to each other now. You don't know how fond of you I've grown. I look at myself all day. You must have a fine figure when you're well. I haven't learned to allow for your big shoulders or long legs yet. Indeed, I don't know that I want to swap back to my old self. I'm having a beautiful time with your friends; there are packs of them up to see me all the time. You're awfully popular, you know. They are teaching me poker; it's one of the things I forgot during my illness. Well, so-long, old man—(You see how adaptable I am)—I'll look you up as soon as the mater lets me out.

Your affectionate TENANT.

This letter worried me—not a little. Suppose, as was more than possible, she should insist on—on retaining my body. How could I evict her? And I was not at all pleased in my new shape, now that health and strength were returning. I found a whole volume of rules and regulations—things I must and mustn't do. I was nagged continually on a thousand small matters: My

language, my manners — everything. I couldn't move unattended. I couldn't move freely. In short, I foresaw that when I finally resumed my health, life would hardly be worth living. My books were all selected for me, and I missed sorely some steady occupation. Charities and embroidery did not interest me, though my fingers seemed willing to tackle the latter.

Now, suppose through the refusal of Miss Delano to come to her own again, I should be condemned! Oh, heavens, no! I wrote and appointed the earliest possible date. I informed all the family that I insisted on seeing Mr. Callandar alone, or I'd make a scene. Tears I found at my disposal and an excellent argument.

At last — Oh, what a weary week it was! — the day, the hour came. I had dressed myself very carefully in Polly's prettiest tea-gown. I listened eagerly for the door-bell for hours — at last it tinkled. I saw my familiar bulk in the doorway. I ran down the stairs — ran against the startled maid coming up with my card — and bounded into the parlor, regardless of the fact that the doctors had forbidden violent exercise.

Polly was standing by the fireplace, shyly, looking very big. She sat down, caught my feet in the rug, and bumped my shoulders on the sofa back, after first hitting my head on the chandelier. "Oh! Oh!" said Polly ruefully. "That's always the way! How well I do look, Mr. Callandar!"

Then she looked at me. It was my face, but it was Polly, my Polly I had grown to love by letter, that looked at me from my eyes. My heart swelled to bursting beneath the pink tea-gown, and I came across and kissed myself right on the moustache that she hadn't shaved off after all.

A moment of utter bliss! — and then! — I found myself sitting in the chair, and Polly — Polly's soul in Polly's body this time — standing beside me — with her face very close to mine. We had exchanged again!

"Oh! Oh!" cried she. "What have I — what have you — what have we done?"

"It's all right. O Polly, Polly, dear! we're all so — mixed up — do let's get married, and — I love you — sweetheart!"

I stood up and kissed her again. This time we did not swap souls, though it felt very much as if we might.

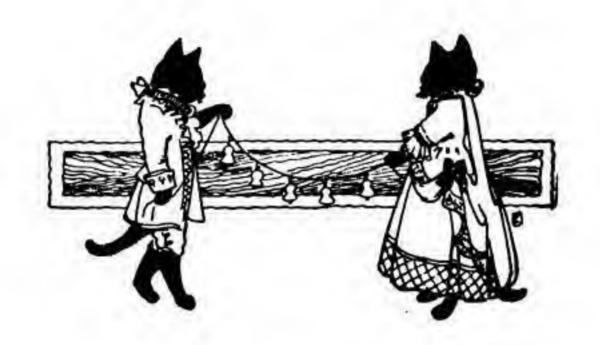
Then suddenly, "Oh, gracious!" she exclaimed. "I'm engaged — to Tom Tregenna — what shall I do?"

"Oh, no, you're not. I broke it off for you!"

"What made you take such liberties," she inquired hotly. "I'd like to know how you knew I'd allow it—that's just like you men!"

"What do you know about it?" I spoke rashly on the old lines of defence — and then we looked at each other and laughed.

So we were very happy, but Dr. Jerrold continues to think Polly the worst coquette on record, and so, I fear, does Tom Tregenna.



## The Dancing Goddess.\*

BY WILLIAM GUTHRIE KELLY.



RUS STERLING was traveling representative of an Eastern concern manufacturing microscopes, telescopes, thermometers and barometers for the trade.

The proprietor of a large department store in the Northwest had sent a complaint to his house

that out of a great number of their thermometers sold that season a large proportion had, after a few days' use, broken at the bulb. They were of a type used on porches, verandas and similar outdoor places, and all those reported broken had been so exposed, but not in any extreme temperatures, either high or low. In every case the bulb had the appearance of having collapsed on the under side, allowing the mercury to escape.

Mr. Sterling, having other business in that locality, which chanced to be the very place in which the glass tubes of the thermometers were made, resolved to look into the matter. Blame had, of course, been promptly laid upon the manufacturers of the glass bulbs, but it remained to conciliate the merchant.

It was late in the afternoon when Sterling arrived — too late to visit the glass works — but there was time for a short and satisfactory talk with Mr. Palmer, the department store proprietor. In passing from his private office to the outer door Sterling paused at the furnishing goods counter to buy some neckware. With his methodical bachelor ways, he was very deliberate in his selection, till he noticed that all about him the salespeople were covering their goods with huge dust-cloths and bringing out hats and wraps, with ears expectant for the six o'clock gong.

Hastening his choice, he handed a five-dollar bill to the impatient saleswoman. In a moment the whirring cash-carrier made

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<sup>\*</sup> The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$100 in The Black Cat story contest ending March 31, 1900.

its last trip and the girl hurriedly handed him his change, a two-dollar bill and a silver dollar. He grasped the note, but the coin, without touching his hand, dropped upon the glass show-case, struck upon its edge, whirled languidly several times, and seemed on the point of falling, when Sterling, as he was about to take it up, noticed that it appeared to rise gradually as it continued revolving. Higher and higher it came at every turn, until it stood straight on its edge, spinning with a steady, even motion — not a rapid whirl — with just sufficient momentum to keep its equilibrium. And there it spun.

Sterling watched it in astonishment, and the salesgirl, pausing in putting on her street clothes, stared a moment and said, superciliously:

"Ah, you're quite a professor of legerdemain!"

Intently regarding the rotating coin, Sterling replied:

"If it's legerdemain you're the professor; you were the last to touch the dollar."

Still the coin spun on, the two stood gazing at it, and Mr. Palmer, emerging from his office, stopped in surprise at the strange scene. Listening to Sterling's story he reflected a moment, and then said:

"I have heard or read that there is thought to be a spot somewhere on earth where all the natural forces — gravitation, attraction, friction, etc. — are neutralized, and that any motion given to an inert object at that point would continue perpetually. But I never knew that any one claimed knowledge of the location of that spot — much less imagined my store to be built over it.

"But if it is"—and his musing look changed to a shrewd, business-like expression—"and that dollar keeps on spinning till noon to-morrow, I've got an advertisement that money couldn't buy. Miss Anderson, you needn't wait, ask the cashier—"

A glance at the cashier's vacant cage and the rapidly emptying store was followed by a change of tone, and putting his hand into his pocket, he added:

- "Never mind, I'll give Mr. Sterling another dollar in place of this nimble one."
- "Oh, come now, Palmer," said Sterling, "that's my dollar, you know. I think I'll keep it."

"Keep a business interest in it, you mean?" replied the merchant, much disappointed, but clinging tenaciously to the main point.

"Well, I hadn't thought of that; its strange performance makes it a desirable pocket-piece — my capital would always be turning, you know. But since you think it such an attraction, perhaps I'd better 'manage' it, and let it play an engagement at your house for a percentage of the 'gate money.'

Half in jest and half in earnest, this badinage continued till the two men were left alone in the store with the awestruck night watchman, waiting to lock the last door.

And still the dollar spun!

There was neither slackening nor acceleration of its speed, no irregularity in its low hum, now audible in the intense stillness, and the image of the Goddess of Liberty could be occasionally caught, as the deliberate coin flashed in the one light left burning.

The result of the conference was that the watchman, who gave but reluctant aid in placing a temporary railing around the transparent pedestal of the spinning dollar, was strictly enjoined to see that no one disturbed it, and the following announcement was inserted in all the morning papers:

#### THE DANCING GODDESS!

A cordial Invitation is extended to the Public to visit a

#### FREE EXHIBITION

Of this Unaccountable Phenomenon at

#### PALMER'S PANTECHNICON.

It was agreed that Sterling should receive a handsome sum for each day the coin continued to turn, and when it ceased, or the engagement terminated, it was to become his property.

Crowds larger than those of bargain-sale Mondays were at the doors when they were opened in the morning. By noon the Dancing Goddess was drawing a multitude; by night it was the sole talk of the town.

Next day the store was again jammed, and a cordon of policemen no more than sufficed to prevent the surging curiosity-seekers from flattening one another against the stout gas-pipe railing now encircling what had been left standing of the former furnishing goods counter.

Palmer's friends winked, and said he was a clever fellow. His competitors sulked, advertised that they did not run museums, and condemned Pantechnicon methods as thoroughly unbusiness-like.

And still the dollar spun on!

Sterling, having cautioned the glass-factory manager that further breaks in bulbs would mean cancelled orders, and transacted some other business, was now ready to leave town, but did not wish to do so without his marvellous dollar. It now had a strong fascination for him, and he spent the afternoon of the third day watching its tireless twirl.

At closing time Palmer said to him:

"Sterling, this scheme doesn't work! The store is crowded—overrun. But receipts grow less every day. People who come to see the Goddess forget everything else, and those who really come to buy catch the fever and buy less and talk more than if they only came to 'shop.' Let's call the thing off!"

Sterling was anxious to resume his trip, and the Dancing Goddess troubled his conscience. If the manifestation were really supernatural, had he a right to profit by it pecuniarily? What was the meaning of the whole affair? He was not sorry to see it ended, and willingly agreed. Yet he shrank from touching the weird thing. But, having so persistently claimed the coin at first, he could not refuse it now, and extending his hand he caught it rather gingerly between thumb and finger, and laid it flat in the other palm.

Both men gave sighs of relief.

- "I don't care to see such a queer thing again," said Palmer.
- "Nor I," assented Sterling.

As he stepped from the store into the dusk of evening, a man eagerly followed, and soon blocked his way. The wildness of the man's face, with the uneasy state of Sterling's mind, combined to give him a nervous shock, and before he recovered, the stranger cried with a strong foreign accent:

"Give me my dollar! You have it — it is mine — mine. For it I have worked for years. Here, take this one for it. Quick! Oh, Heaven, quick!"

One hand held a silver dollar and the other was extended in a beseeching attitude. The man did not seem to meditate violence, and Sterling, gathering his wits, remembered that he had seen the wild-eyed stranger foremost in the crowds around the spinning dollar. His clothes were shabby and his face showed starvation and illness. He trembled so that his teeth chattered.

Taking in all this at a glance, Sterling wondered what new turn was about to be given to this remarkable affair. The man leaned nearer to him, speaking hoarsely, but in a calmer manner:

"Listen, and fear me not. You don't know - you don't understand — but I'll tell you all. I fixed that dollar. It's perpetual motion! I tried for years to find it, and now I succeed. I've worked, I've begged, I've starved, I've stolen - I've done everything for it. I had it nearly done a dozen times in other metals, but nothing but silver will do - I've found that out. I finished it - all but its shaft - two weeks ago. Then I worked for enough to buy food to keep me alive until I could finish the shaft. I had my mind so wrapped up in that shaft that - O God! - I gave the wrong dollar at the provision store. I ran back. They laughed at me - they thought me crazy - and put me into the street. Then I was crazy. I ran about, looking for every man with a silver dollar, sure that he had mine. Then I passed by here and saw the crowds and went in. There it was, spinning, spinning! My precious model of perpetual motion! But I dared not touch it -I could only watch. The big policeman would call me a thief, and hustle me off, and that would be the end. So I waited and watched, and I know that you have it. It's mine - you must give it to me. Let me show you! I sawed it in two - I broke thermometers to get mercury - let me show you!"

The man's manner and words were so convincing that Sterling handed him the coveted dollar. Clutching it firmly, the excited man skilfully laid it open with his thumb-nail, as one would a watch, and from a series of tortuous channels, grooved in the body of the coin, bright globules of quicksilver coursed and ran from his finger-tips.

"See! did I not say so?" he exclaimed. "But the wheel still needs its shaft, and I may not live to finish it. I am weak and ill from starvation — and something clutches me here."

He drew his hand across his breast, as he had done once or twice before, gasped for breath, and his face grew ashen.

"Twice I have nearly died. If I thought I should go before this is done, I would destroy it. No one but I shall have the glory of the greatest invention of the ages."

Closing his claw-like fingers over the priceless coin, the man suddenly thrust his other dollar into Sterling's hand, and turning, ran blindly with uncertain gait across the street.

For a moment Sterling stood in astonishment. Then, prompted by curiosity and a sudden desire to befriend the unfortunate man, he started in pursuit.

Through obscure and narrow streets and crooked alleys, by the fitful gleam of moonlight, the chase led to the water side, where Sterling rapidly gained upon the panting fugitive, running wearily along a stone causeway.

Suddenly the inventor's feeble feet stumbled and he fell upon his face. The dollar flew from his hand, struck the stone pavement with a silvery ring, and, spinning furiously, whirled away towards the water and disappeared in its sluggish black depths.

With a despairing shrick that sent a thrill through Sterling, the crazed inventor plunged after the Dancing Goddess, to whose worship his life was vowed and who now claimed the sacrifice.

As he sank, the moon emerged once more and cast its bright beams upon a chaplet of bubbles as silvery as the drops of mercury that had streamed from his livid fingers.



## The Story of The Black Cat

By Its Founder and Publisher

When, nearly five years ago, the first number of The Black Cat appeared, it contained neither promise nor prospec-The time-honored list of distinguished contributors was not in evidence; the customary prophecy, even - that a long-felt want was about to be filled found no place in its pages. The magazine was from the very outset offered solely upon its merits - in contents and cost, in matter and make-up, it should tell its own story. How that story was received is best expressed by a sworn circulation exceeding 120,000 copies per issue. How The Black Cat came to be established, however, what obstacles and prejudices its complete departure from beaten paths encountered - that forms another story, which at this time, when it is about to enter upon its sixth year, may prove of interest.

A dozen years ago, when the ten-cent magazine was yet unknown, and when the cost of production had declined to a point that rendered the advent of such popular priced periodicals no longer a question of possibility, but merely one of time, the undersigned proposed to a number of New England business men and capitalists the establishment in Boston of a ten-cent magazine of original fiction that should mark a new departure, not only in price, but in other important respects - in matter and methods as well. The proposal met with no favor the chief objection urged being the objection the man with a really new idea usually encounters. "If a market existed for such a periodical why hadn't other publishers seized the opportunity? If a really good magazine could profitably be produced and sold in large editions at ten cents, why did the publishers of the Atlantic and Harper's charge 35

cents? If the serial story was, as a matter of fact, giving a large majority of the present-day people a pain in the side, why didn't publishers and authors cut it short? If there really were men and women - other than those whose names had become household wordswho could tell in good English clever, fascinating stories, why didn't we hear of them? And if many intelligent people really read a story, not with a view to ascertaining whether its author is a perfect lady or a dyspeptic gentleman, but read it because of its merits as a story - if all this be true, well, what was the matter with 35-cent magazines, anyway - their editors surely received hundreds of clever short stories? What did the editors do with them?" Well - the result was that the writer put off the project to a time when he should be able, without outside capital, to carry it into effect. As, during the following few years, one ten-cent magazine after another made its appearance, he concluded in 1895, when he was finally ready to launch his enterprise, to go still further on the road of popular prices, and the result was The Black Cat at five cents. Even then the lithographers of whom the earlier covers were ordered pronounced the printing of editions of 100,000 suicidal. The news companies shook their heads and prophesied failure - people might buy ten thousand copies once to satisfy their curiosity, but the thing couldn't last - there were already too many story publications. Sage advertisers, although confronted by the fact that one and two-cent dailies, which had revolutionized the newspaper business, ranked among the most profitable mediums, insisted that a monthly magazine of original short stories, at five cents,

would simply appeal to five-cent people. When, month after month, the sort of "five-cent people" who are at the head of libraries, literary clubs and colleges kept right on satisfying their curiosity - when annual subscriptions by the thousand came from these, from professional men and women, and from homes where quality and merit, not quantity or price, regulate purchases - when news companies throughout America each sent standing orders for 5,000, 10,000 and 15,000 copies-when the foremost newspapers in England and America stole its copyrighted stories - then came the imitators, here, there, everywhere! And everyone, knowing that sharpers do not imitate failures, acknowledged the success of The Black Cat! And while it continued to meet with increased success, its imitators continued to meet with increased failure, for the very good reason that, although in make-up they closely resembled The Black Cat, they differed from it in matter just as the counterfeit differs from the genuine. To pick up, borrow, or steal five stories and offer them for five cents was one thing; to find people who would buy them was another thing. By adopting a course that appealed as just, fair, generous and business-like to writers, The Black Cat secured contributions that at once appealed to readers. By judging stories solely upon their merits, without reference to the name or reputation of writers; by paying, not according to length, but according to strength; by saying to authors who knocked for admission, not "You have the right to send us a story, but there all your rights terminate; we pay what we please, how we please, and when we please - that 's literature!" but saying, instead, "Send your story; if available, we will name our price; if that price is satisfactory to you we will accept the story and pay at once on acceptance; that 's business, for we know of no good reason why the rule that governs the

buying and selling of the product of brawn - whereby, the world over, the producer, alike with the purchaser, has a voice in the fixing of price and terms why this rule should not apply in the buying and selling of the product of brain;" by paying a higher price for short stories than was ever paid before, and by making every number of The Black Cat complete in itself, so that the reader would n't have to wait six months or a year before learning whether the hero was finally accepted or died cured by doing these things The Black Cat did what appealed alike to the capable writer and the discriminating reader.

And as to the advertiser, the limit of sixteen pages originally fixed for announcements has been twice extended, and the last Holiday issue contained forty-nine pages of advertising. This increase is due to the fact that while there are houses that - like the political hero that continues to religiously cast his vote for Andrew Jackson for the presidency still include Godey's Lady's Book and Peterson's Magazine in their annual selection of mediums, there is that majority whose judgment and experience have amply demonstrated that every number of The Black Cat has a permanent value for its hundreds of thousands of readers, and consequently a permanent value for its advertisers possessed by no other magazine.

No one will deny the importance of the bigger, bulkier, costlier magazine of to-day that deals elaborately, learnedly and picturesquely with fiction, poetry, science and timely topics, but in its distinctive field The Black Cat, judged by its record, has made and fills an enviable place of its own. While its success is naturally a source of pride to its founder, that pride is subordinate to the feeling of gratitude for the encouragement and support his undertaking has, from the outset, received.

## The Story That Cured His Wife.\*

BY C. A. STEARNS.

HE Colonel's young wife had suffered a bereavement that left her in that state of melancholia which is the first stage of insanity. Nothing could rouse her from her dull, listless brooding. The surgeon of the post, of course, advised complete change of scene; but that was

out of the question. Yet an immediate change of mental attitude was imperative. How could it be brought about?

While pondering deeply on this urgent problem, a chance word suggested to the Colonel a desperate expedient. Would it succeed? Might not the remedy prove more dangerous than the disease? Anything, he felt, would be better than that alarming lethargy.

Seating himself by his wife's couch, he with difficulty secured her wandering attention, and this is the story he told:

At the close of a hot, sultry afternoon, threatening a thunderstorm, a young lieutenant of engineers, in charge of a government surveying party, had gone on some distance in advance of his men to select a camping place for the night. Emerging from the forest, he entered a glade of considerable size, bounded on one side by a perpendicular ledge of rock, fifteen or twenty feet in height. Following the ledge, he came upon a decaying log cabin, built against the rock. Only a part of the thickly moss-grown roof remained, and above it projected the trunk of a large tree, built into the log wall of the shack at one of its angles nearest the ledge.

Startled by the loneliness of this wreck of a human shelter in the dense wilderness, the lieutenant pushed open the door, hung on wooden pins, which creaked dismally as it stiffly yielded. The earthen floor was littered with fragments of the broken roof and a

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few rusty cooking utensils. There were a mouldy table and bench, roughly hewn from tree trunks, and a three-legged stool. At the rear, which he had naturally expected to find of solid rock, the wooden wall was continued, and no light came through the wide chinks from which the clay had fallen out. From a common centre in the largest of these crannies charred streaks radiated, as though burnt into the solid wood by tongues of flame.

As the young engineer stood there gazing around the mouldering ruin, he wondered vaguely why he should care to waste a moment in such a desolate and uninviting spot. Yet he could not make up his mind to go. The daylight seemed to fade away, and was replaced by a strange, dull, yellowish glare. Several times he resolved to leave, but still he stayed. In a little while he felt a sensation of numbness in his feet. His eyelids grew heavy and drowsiness stole over him, bringing with it the terrible paralysis of nightmare. He felt that he could not move if he tried—and he dared not try.

Just then a distant shout came to his ears. It drew nearer and nearer, and the surveyors, crossing the glade in search of him, reached the open door, hanging on one of its pegs. With feet as heavy as lead he stepped over its threshold and almost with effusion greeted Sergeant Lawson, the hardest-headed man in the party, who came up first. The sergeant stared at him and into the gloomy hut, and lingered, looking curiously after the lieutenant, as with ever-lightening feet he led the men away from the cabin to a camping spot at some distance.

When camp was pitched, the lieutenant gave orders that the men should be waked and camp broken at half-past three in the morning, for a long march before breakfast in the cool of the day. As they sat about the fire after supper, enjoying a short smoke before turning in, the lieutenant could not keep his thoughts from the deserted cabin and his strange experience there. Pointing with his pipestem, he said to Lawson:

"Queer old shack over there."

The sergeant nodded and continued to look at him steadily with such an expression that the officer felt impelled to relate what had happened to him. Again Lawson nodded, knocked the ashes from his own pipe and said:

"I went in myself and had exactly the same sensations."

Each continued to look steadily into the other's face. They were men of action, not words. At length the lieutenant said:

"There's a moon for an hour before daylight, and an hour's sleep won't be missed—even if we can sleep. What do you say to an exploration of the ruined cabin before we march?"

It was so agreed.

When they stood again in the moonlight before the old hut, half buried in its mossy shroud, an unaccountable depression crept over them, like a miasmatic fog. Entering silently, they sat down on the bench, and looked about as their eyes became accustomed to the darkness. The moonlight, filtering through the broken roof, grew dimmer and dimmer as they gazed, and was gradually replaced by the faint, yellowish light they had seen in the afternoon, like that of the sun in an eclipse. The symptoms they had before experienced returned — the tingling sensation in the feet, creeping up through the body. Then the yellow light itself failed, and they were left in pitchy darkness. Both men fumbled for matches, but their fingers were numb and useless, and they felt the same dreadful numbness stealing over their senses.

At that moment they were startled into consciousness by an awful sight. At the point among the logs of the rear wall where the lieutenant had noticed the charred streaks, a straight, dagger-shaped dart of flame shot downward toward the floor and remained there quivering. Then a second flashed and wavered beside the first. They gave out a lurid, sulphurous light, like flames seen through a dense fog or smoke. Rapidly this smoky light, pouring through the crevices, shaped itself, until there appeared before them, nebulous but distinct, a towering form in the semblance of humanity. It seemed to glow with fiercest heat, yet, far from giving warmth, it only added to the deathly chill. As the lieutenant saw that fearful shape, solidifying out of the fiery vapor, he was assailed by an unreasoning, overwhelming, unconconquerable fear. He groped toward his companion, who sat rigid as marble, and laid a cold hand upon his arm. At his touch the trooper shrieked and dropped to the floor, leaving his officer alone with the Shape.

[As the Colonel's low, impressive tones put vivid life into this

thrilling verbal picture, he noted the light of concentrated attention in the eyes of his wife, followed by the welcome gleam of returning interest in human affairs.]

There the lieutenant sat, continued the narrator, his gaze held by a horrible fascination. He tried to speak, to stir, to move. He could not lift a finger. Not a muscle would answer his will. Even his eyes followed the quivering, swaying form of fire without his control.

The Shape grew more and more into the likeness of a human being of malignant type. Its color changed to a pale, greenish tint, like the phosphorescence of decaying wood. Faintly outlined in this dreadful medium could be traced a sunken, retreating brow, shadowed by a mat of hair, a hawklike nose, and long, wolfish teeth gleaming through a drooping moustache above a brutal jaw.

· The eyes, compared with the face, seemed dark spots, yet they glistened with a ghastly light of their own. The engineer officer was conscious that those glowing orbs, bursting into intermittent flame like the embers of a dying fire, were fixed upon him with consuming hatred, and he vainly tried to evade their baleful glare.

His strength was slipping away with his enthralled volition, but he feared not bodily harm as much as he dreaded the assault and capture of his will, for he realized that some more potent psychic force than he possessed was striving to wrest from him his individuality. Physical death were welcome, compared with the unspeakable horror of the annihilation of his soul, as the result of its obsession by demoniac powers.

He struggled to retain his reason. With an effort of will that brought the dew of agony to his brow, he almost flung himself upright upon his feet, in an effort to escape. As he did so, the hideous Shape advanced, projected by the weird flames playing through the gaping chinks of the rear wall, and crept stealthily forward like an animal seeking its prey. The lieutenant could in fancy feel those horrible fangs piercing his very soul. As the dread Form was upon him, he instinctively threw up his arm, as if to ward off a physical blow, when a shock—a searing of the flesh as at the touch of liquid air—an etching jet of flame that

burned to the bone, ran through his wrist. Then he felt himself caught and dragged over the ground.

When he looked about with returning consciousness, he found himself surrounded by his men, some yards from the crumbling cabin, with Lawson stretched upon the grass, still unconscious. Missing the lieutenant and the sergeant at the hour set for breaking camp, the surveyors, attracted by a bright light in the ruined shack, had sought and found them there, insensible, and apparently overcome by mephitic fumes that filled the place. Both were as weak as though convalescing from a lingering fever, and the early morning march was abandoned.

By sunrise the leaders had so far recovered as to superintend the demolition of the cabin in which they had suffered such frightful fear. When the rotting log walls were thrown down and burnt, an extraordinary sight was revealed. As the blazing logs fell away from the face of the cliff, it was seen that the rear wall — in which there had been a movable section on pegs like the entrance door - masked a second chamber, a cavern in the rock. There was a rude fireplace in it, deep with ashes. Over it hung iron hooks and pots; crucibles and various instruments and utensils were scattered about. Beyond the fireplace and a rough workbench something was vaguely outlined in the dim light. Approached with a torch, it proved to be a human skeleton of unusual height, whose bleached bones were cracked and distorted. It was complete, except the feet, which were missing. The stumps of the ankle bones rested in a deep vat, sunk in the floor of the cave. One bony hand, split and blackened, grasped a wire that connected with the great growing tree trunk in the cabin wall.

It was with feelings of awe that the little party gazed at this strange sight, but the two leaders were glad to find themselves entirely free from the oppressive symptoms which had overpowered them when on the spot before. They looked at each other intently in silence, but afterwards exchanged confidences.

Was that the last page in the dread history of some student of unknown forces—some searcher into forbidden mysteries—trapped to his death amid the strange devices of his unholy occupation? It seemed so. Eagerly absorbed in some experiment while a great storm was raging without, his feet by an awful acci-

dent had slipped into the vat, containing no one knows what frightful mixture. To save himself, he had grasped the wire attached to the tree, which at that moment, by some strange chance or merited fatality, was riven by lightning, which followed the wire and passed through his body.

Had the sultry summer air, heavily charged with electricity, enabled the restless spirit of the sorcerer to utilize again that fateful circuit, impregnate the very ground with a resistless, benumbing power, and materialize itself electrically into the lambent, flaming figure they had seen? So they always believed, and the deep scar, an inch long, in the lieutenant's wrist, which he will carry to his grave, confirms him in that belief.

The Colonel's wife started up as he concluded his story, and following her gaze, his eyes also rested on a livid scar on his own right hand, reaching from the base of the thumb to the wrist.

"O Richard!" she cried, rising and walking the room in her excitement, "I know at last the secret of that dreadful burn. It was you who suffered that awful experience. Oh, what if I had lost you too!"

Raising his eyes to hers, he saw with joy the wholesome brightness of sanity and health. As she sprang to her feet, the shackles of her morbid fancies dropped away, and she stood there glowing, once more the winsome and vivacious bride. The story had cured her.



## Are You Insured Against the Blues?

And are the friends and fellow-travelers, the strangers and fellow-vacationists with whom you are to spend the summer—are they insured? Every properly equipped

## Vacation Gripsack

should contain the Insurance against the Blues which we furnish, postage paid, for 50 cents.

Here is what it consists of:

Glen Echo Mystery, \$1,000 Prize Story, W. Wellman.
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The Barber of the Alpena, J. Harwood.
A Postal Card Tragedy, E. F. Bishop.
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The Scoop of the Scarlet Tanager, Edward B. Clark.
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The Lady and the Kwang-Chiu, Frank L. Pollock.
The House Across The Way, Leo Gale.
Mrs. Sloan's Curiosity, Mabell Shipple Clarke.
The Seaweed Room, Clarice Irene Clingham.
The Second Edition, Geik Turner.
The Luck of Killing Day, McPherson Fraser.
Silas F. Quigley—To Arrive, Lewis Hopkins Rogers.
The Polar Magnet, Philip Verrill Mighels.
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Interrupted Co

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The Evening Spirit, Albert Bigelow Paine.
The Love Chase of Anstin, Juliet Tompkins.
My Detective instinct, Emma M. Wise.
Bigler's Barometer, Sam Davis.
The Skyland Treasure, F. B. Millard.
In the Mohawk Club, Theodore Roberts.
Reincarnation, Stanley Edwards Johnson.
The Ben Bolt, \$100 Prize Story, B. L. Taylor.
Holding Down a Homestead, H. W. Phillips.
The Clasp of Fire, Carrie E. Garrett.
A Soft Soap Affair, C. B. Lewis.
The Camels of Iphi, Charles Clayton Dana.
Mr. Jones's Dream, Edward Robins,
The Passing of the Polly Ann, Collins Shackelford.
The Obsequies of Ole Miss Jng, Jean Ross Irvine.
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The Colby Girls, Charles Bryant Howard.
Trans-Saharan Station 15-M., J. E. Pember.
Her Bare Foot, \$200 Prize Story, William C. Hudson,
Miss Phebe and Mr. Lorton, Charles Sloan Reid.
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The Peacock and the Copper Moon, Frances Mathews.
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The Captain's Gray, Ella F. Mosby.
M'Goulighan, Francis Lynde,
Private Zembler, C. B. Lewis.
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Color of Heaven, Margaret Dodge.
Dead-Horse Drift, James O. Fazza.
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by drowning the discomforts of travel, discouraging dyspepsia, dissipating sadness of heart, and otherwise doubling the delights of the vacation season. Send us your 50 cents (stamps will do) while the limited supply of back numbers of The Black Cat lasts, and we will mail at once, postage paid, the 20 numbers containing the above 100 stories.

The Shortstory Publishing Co., Boston, Mass.



# the Black Cat

#### A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 60.

#### SEPTEMBER, 1900.

5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

THE BLACK CAT is devoted exclusively to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for Stories that are Stories, and it pays not according to length, but according to strength. To receive attention, manuscripts must be sent unrolled, fully prepaid, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return. All MSS, are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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## The Levitation of Jacob.\*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.



I cast my eye over the advertising columns of the Journal I was attracted by the following notice, printed in small type and tucked away in an inconspicuous place:

HIRAM JACOB,

Post-office Box 975.

ANNIHILATOR OF THE UNDESIRABLE

I am not naturally a person of much curiosity, but it seemed to me that there was something very unusual about this advertisement. It may not have impressed other readers in the same way, but it surely appealed to me as a most singular announcement. I could not rid my mind of it, and the more I thought of it the more curious I became.

But I never spend time in idle speculation. My policy is to get at the facts of a case. Accordingly, I clipped the advertisement and enclosed it in a note addressed to Hiram Jacob, asking him to furnish me with full particulars.

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- \* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

After waiting a day I received this answer, written on the typewriter in regular business form:

My Dear Sir: — In reply to your favor of this date I beg to inform you that I am now prepared to fill orders for the extermination of human pests. Drunkards and worthless grandparents a specialty. Particular attention paid to the annihilation of personal enemies, money-borrowers, organ-grinders, mischievous gossips, miserly relatives and confirmed dyspeptics. In short, my business applies to all individuals who are a burden to society or whose existence interferes with the life, liberty or happiness of others.

I am the discoverer and sole possessor of a method of annihilation that defies detection. It is instantaneous, clean, noiseless and absolutely certain. It leaves not a shadow of a trace behind. It is annihilation, pure and simple. This I guarantee. In the case of relatives it saves all bother and expense of funerals. This is an important item.

My terms are \$500 for each case, cash in advance. Twenty per cent. discount for two in a family if ordered at the same time. Orders executed within three days after receipt, or money refunded. Special yearly rates for the annihilation of tramps.

My patrons assume no risk. Those who fear possibility of detection (though I guarantee there is none) need not reveal their identity. Simply write name and address of party to be exterminated and forward with bank note to

Yours truly,
HIRAM JACOB,
Annihilator of the Undesirable.

There was a straightforwardness about this letter which impressed me very favorably. The man was evidently sincere, notwithstanding that he was several generations in advance of his time. But I was particularly struck with what he said in reference to his method of business. The absolute annihilation of a body has always been regarded as a physical impossibility, yet here was a man who claimed to have discovered a means of accomplishing it and was ready to put it to practical use for the benefit of humanity.

As an investigator and a seeker after truth I felt it my duty to look into this matter more deeply. I have spent many thousands of dollars in scientific experiments and research, and the question of five hundred dollars offered but little objection to satisfying myself of the truth of this man's claim regarding his remarkable discovery. A more serious matter was the selection of somebody to be annihilated.

I had in mind quite a number of both men and women who would answer the purpose very satisfactorily. The difficulty lay

in making a choice. There were several whose sudden taking off I knew would prove a godsend to their relatives. In fact, I was myself possessed of an aged and unbalanced aunt, whose death was impatiently awaited by every member of the family.

She was a helpless invalid, totally deaf and almost blind, and subject to the peevish hallucination that the neighbors were spitting at her. Her lucid moments were devoted to wagging her head and mumbling grievously because she was not in heaven, where she had an idea she belonged.

Everybody said — and said it quite freely, too — that it would be a mercy if she died. But whenever she developed alarming symptoms which gave promise of her speedy termination, the doctor was hastily called and she was nursed back to life with much care and solicitude.

It was probably the same spirit which impelled us to do all we could to prolong her days of misery that now deterred me from selecting her for the hand of Jacob. Besides her I had two or three other relatives who, for one reason or another, would have been more agreeable in the graveyard than around the house, but I have a natural delicacy about tampering with relatives.

At the same time, to get rid of a member of the family would have served a purely personal end, and that was not my object in this matter. I desired simply to make a scientific investigation, aside from all family or selfish considerations, and I therefore determined to select some one whose annihilation would not only serve the cause of science, but at the same time be a benefit to society at large.

Accordingly, I picked out Bill Tizer. Bill Tizer was a notorious scamp — a hard drinker and a gambler; convicted of a number of minor offences and always suspected of larger ones; a charge on the community, utterly worthless, and a dangerous element of society. If ever there was a man unfit to live it was Bill Tizer, and I felt myself a public benefactor when I placed my order for him with the Annihilator of the Undesirable.

For the next two days after mailing the order I spent my time following Bill Tizer about town. It was important that I should be on hand when the annihilation took place, and as a consequence most of my time was given up to lounging about in saloons. It

was not altogether good for my reputation, but I have learned to sacrifice much for the sake of science, and when it was rumored that I had taken to drink and was seen prowling about Deadman's Alley in a state of intoxication, I accepted my fate with the meekness of a martyr.

The reward of my vigilance and self-sacrifice came at last. It was on the afternoon of the third day, and it may not be amiss to add that I shall never forget that day. It was shortly after three o'clock. I was crossing a street in the business section of the city, following in the tipsy footsteps of Bill Tizer, who was a few feet ahead of me. I was just in the act of reaching forward to pull him out of the way of a cart when a most astonishing thing occurred —

Bill Tizer suddenly vanished.

The hand that I had raised to take him by the shoulder fell upon empty air. Only an instant before he had been directly in front of me. I was looking right at him. Now he was gone as completely as if he had never existed.

The effect of his disappearance was like that of a gas jet that is suddenly extinguished — now you see it, now you don't. He simply went out of existence, instantly and completely, without a sign, without a trace of what had become of him.

Had I been the only witness of this marvel I should probably have doubted my senses; but what I had seen was confirmed by the driver of the cart, who was so overcome with fright that he gave vent to a series of unearthly yells, which not only served his horse as a pretext to run away, but attracted a large and inquisitive crowd.

The street at this point is paved with Belgian blocks. I examined the pavement carefully. It was firm and solid. There was no manhole, no sewer trap, no opening of any kind into which my victim might have fallen.

Neither could I discover the slightest trace of the man. There was no sign of blood, no scrap of clothing, no mark of any sort in the dust or on the stones — absolutely nothing to indicate the spot where he had disappeared or to show how he had passed out of existence. He was gone, body and soul.

There could be no doubt about it; I was the witness of a mar-

vellous phenomenon, a phenomenon in contradiction of all the laws of physics — the complete and total annihilation of matter. The demonstration was complete and beyond question; but the mystery of it was unfathomable.

The announcement that Bill Tizer was missing and that no clue to his whereabouts could be found attracted but little public interest. Despite the story of his disappearance as told by the drunken driver, it was taken for granted that he had tumbled into the river, and the police made no special effort to find him, nor did I deem it worth while to make any mention of my association with the affair. It was a case of good riddance to bad rubbish, and the public was satisfied to let it go at that.

But scarcely had the incident passed from mind, when the mystery connected with it was revived by another remarkable and mysterious disappearance. A retired banker, an old man by the name of Muldoon, suddenly disappeared one morning.

He had left his home to call at the house of a friend about two blocks away. Several persons distinctly remembered having passed him on the street, and one man testified that he had stopped and talked with him at the very doorstep of his friend's house. That was the last seen of him. He never reached his destination.

While the police and the public racked their startled brains for some solution of this extraordinary affair, I saw in it at once the mighty hand of the mysterious Jacob. Evidently he had secured another customer, for I had not considered it necessary to place a second order with him, as he had fully satisfied me of his ability as an annihilator. My chief desire now was to learn his secret; yet there was something so overwhelmingly wonderful and incomprehensible about it that I was at a loss to even conjecture his possible method of operation.

Then, about a week after the annihilation of the venerable Muldoon, the community was thrown into a state of bewilderment by the similar disappearance of an old lady. Her case was even more remarkable than either of the previous ones. She was an invalid (had been an invalid for fifty years), and was being wheeled slowly up and down the sunny side of the street near her home, when suddenly she and her entire outfit of chair, nurse and pet poodle vanished from the face of the earth. It may readily be imagined that my science-loving soul was stirred to its depths by this demonstration of Jacob's miraculous force; and while, of course, I agreed with the community that it was a very unceremonious way for this time-worn lady to make her exit from the stage of life, I was too deeply impressed with the scientific aspect of the case to give much attention to the sentimental side of it.

But my feelings on the subject were very abruptly altered by a startling and most unexpected incident. I received the following letter from Hiram Jacob:

DEAR SIR: — Your attentions to a certain young lady, whom it is unnecessary for me to mention by name, are the cause of much unhappiness to a fellow-mortal. On his behalf I warn you to completely sever your acquaintanceship with the said young lady on or before the 20th inst.

Now, I am not a man who is readily frightened; but the prospect of personally experiencing complete annihilation was by no means agreeable. There could be no doubt that that was the meaning of the letter. Some cowardly rival for the hand of Helen Baker had evidently placed an order for me with the inscrutable Jacob. Unfortunately, Miss Baker had so many admirers in addition to myself that I was at a loss to know which one to accuse of this villanous threat; nor was I in a financial position to wreak wholesale vengeance by placing an order for the annihilation of the entire lot.

At the same time, I did not propose to be bulldozed, and within an hour after the receipt of the letter I called on Miss Baker with an avowal which I had had in contemplation for some time past; and when I left I was calling her Helen, and we kissed one another good-night.

I mention this, not so much for the purpose of showing Miss Baker's preference for me above her numerous suitors, but to demonstrate that I am no coward.

I knew it would be both senseless and futile to call the attention of the police to Jacob's letter. It contained no real threat of violence; and were I to explain who the writer was, by declaring him to be the destroyer of Bill Tizer, it would be impossible to prove it. Besides, if by any possibility I could prove the assertion, it would necessarily involve me in the matter and I would be

adjudged as guilty as Jacob himself — perhaps more so — and that would mean the disgraceful termination of my days on the end of a rope. Between the two, I preferred clean, respectable annihilation.

As to giving up Helen, that was out of the question. I was engaged to her now, and I am particularly conscientious about keeping my engagements. My rival should see that I was not a man to be intimidated, and furthermore I was determined he should not succeed in his murderous design.

I made up my mind to find Hiram Jacob. I felt that if I could once get hold of him I could arrange matters to our mutual satisfaction as between brother scientists. Pride would not permit me to write to him, for I would not put myself in the attitude of pleading for mercy.

I had made several attempts before to locate him, for my curiosity had impelled me to seek from him an explanation of his marvellous secret, but all my efforts in that direction had been in vain. Beyond his post-office box he appeared to have no existence.

As the matter had now assumed a much more serious aspect I devoted my entire time and energy to his discovery. The date fixed for my extermination was but five days off. Three of these days I spent in the post-office, from early morning until late at night, keeping a watch on Box 975.

Despite my vigilance it was not until this much of my time had been consumed that I was able to discover who took the mail from this particular box. It was only then by the merest chance that I made the discovery. I happened to turn rather suddenly in my slow pacing up and down the lobby and caught a small boy in the act of taking a letter from No. 975. He unlocked and closed the box again so quickly that had I been fifteen seconds later I should have missed him.

Putting the letter in his pocket he left the building. I at once followed him, keeping him well in sight, but avoiding any appearance of tracking him. After a walk of several blocks he stopped at a letter box on a street corner. Taking the letter from his pocket he placed it in a large envelope and sealed it, and was in the act of mailing it when it slipped from his hand and fell to the

ground. Ere he could pick it up I saw the address, "Room 37, Dunton Building."

That was all. There was no name. But the clew was sufficient, and the next day found me knocking at No. 37, Dunton Building, bright and early in the morning. Six different times I called and pounded on the door and stamped about impatiently in the hall, but each time without success. Then the janitor told me that no one occupied the room. He said some one had rented it, but never used it; the only one who called was the postman, and he always dropped the letters through the opening in the door.

With the aid of a button-hook and several keys I succeeded in gaining an entrance to the room the next morning. This was the twentieth of the month, my last day of grace, and I took it for granted that desperate chances were permissible.

The room was without furniture and totally bare. On the floor lay two letters where the carrier had dropped them through the door. I had brought my lunch with me, for I was determined to remain until Mr. Jacob called for his letters. Notwithstanding the janitor's statement, it was plain that Jacob must sneak into the room some time during the day or night to get his mail. I also had my revolver with me, for contingencies.

Two or three hours passed, without a sound or sign of anybody. My vigil was becoming irksome. I sat on the window-sill, keeping one eye on the door and allowing the other to see as much as it could of the roofs and chimneys outside, by way of diversion.

Twelve o'clock came and I was still alone. I took my lunch from my pocket, and as I did so I happened to glance down at the floor. The letters that had been lying there close to the door had disappeared.

A creepy chill passed over me. No one had entered the room. I had fastened the bolt when I came in and the door was still bolted. There was no opening under the door through which the letters could have been extracted.

The situation was positively uncanny, and combined with the mystery of Jacob's existence and the realization of his fearful power, I do not think I can be blamed for feeling decidedly uncomfortable — not to say scared.

There are times when the bravest of men lose their nerve, when judgment and reason are thrown to the winds under the stress of sudden fear or excitement. I rushed from the room and out into the street. There was now but one chance for my life. Pride, love, happiness must be the sacrifice — but Helen would understand when I explained the terrible situation to her. The last day of my life was ebbing away, and Jacob, that dark angel of death, might take it into his head to call early.

When I reached the house I hesitated. My senses were coming back to me. Perhaps my hated rival was watching me, smiling with diabolical satisfaction at my weakness. I let my hand drop from the door-bell without ringing it. Pride and determination returned. I was myself once more — unconquered and undaunted. I turned and walked with a firm step toward my own home.

Arrived there, I wrote a long and most affectionate letter of farewell to Helen. I decided to send it by special delivery, in order that she might receive it before the news of my disappearance reached her. It would lessen the shock. As I read the missive over it brought tears to my eyes, it aroused in me an inexpressible sympathy for Helen in her impending bereavement. She would be deprived even of the consolation of putting flowers on my grave. There would be no grave, no remains, no funeral, no opportunity for a last expression of love.

I also wrote letters to several of my scientific friends, explaining my situation and asking them, in the name of science, to discover this man Jacob and force from him an explanation of what had become of me.

I was still writing, seated at a small table on the back veranda overlooking the garden, when I was interrupted by the appearance of a small, genial-faced man, about fifty years of age, who came up the steps, smiling most graciously.

"Pardon my interruption," he said politely, coming forward and shaking my hand with great cordiality. "My name is Jacob — Hiram Jacob."

Then, taking a seat directly opposite me at the table, he continued—smiling blandly all the while—"I have called a little earlier than I expected, as I have an engagement out of the city; and it has occurred to me that if you have come to a decision in

the matter about which I wrote you, it would be useless to put off till to-morrow that which can be done to-day. May I ask, therefore, what your decision is?"

"My decision is that I will not be bulldozed by anybody," I answered warmly, bringing my fist down on the table.

"Very well," he replied calmly. "That settles the matter at once. But before proceeding, I think I owe you an explanation, in view of my letter of the fifteenth."

"No explanations are necessary," I retorted. "I am fully aware of who you are, Mr. Jacob, and what you intend doing. I have myself employed your services."

"Ah, indeed," he answered. "Of course as all my correspondents are anonymous I cannot be expected to recognize old patrons. I trust you found my services satisfactory?"

"Not only satisfactory, but of the greatest interest," I replied, glad of a chance to gain time. "I am myself a scientist, and your discovery has aroused my most ardent curiosity and, I may add, my warmest admiration. And by the way," I added suddenly, "I am also much interested in the manner in which you obtain your mail from Room 37, Dunton Building."

I thought I would startle him, but he answered quietly: "In my room below No. 37, where I have an office in the name of Thomas Sullivan, I simply pull a cord that is attached to a hinged plank in the floor above, and the letters drop through an opening in the ceiling whenever I am ready to receive them. That's a very simple trick; don't you think it is?"

I told him I thought it was very simple indeed.

"I want to be perfectly frank with you," he went on, "for there is no reason why I should conceal anything from you. It flatters me to know that you are interested in my discovery, and I have no objection to explaining it to you, as one man of science to another, especially as you will yourself be the subject of a demonstration of it within the next few minutes."

"Will seven hundred and fifty dollars induce you to throw up the job?" I asked.

"Couldn't think of it for a moment, my dear sir," he answered, striking a match and lighting his cigar. "I have a reputation to sustain, and I have made it a rule never to permit anything to

interfere with carrying out an order. I can assure you, however, that it is painless, absolutely painless; and besides, you have the satisfaction of knowing that your annihilation means the happiness of a fellow-being."

"Then you mean to say that there is no possible means by which this murder can be avoided?" I asked, half rising in my chair with a determination to have first play in the game by shooting Mr. Jacob through the head.

"Tut, tut, my dear sir; you will gain nothing by such tactics as that," he answered, serenely, looking at me with half-closed eyes as he puffed the smoke from his smiling mouth. "I have merely to press the button you see on this instrument," he added, holding up to view the small, leather-covered box he had with him, "and the work is done in the twinkling of an eye."

I settled back in my chair. "And is your power of annihilation contained in that little, camera-like box?" I asked, forgetting in my curiosity the fate that was so near at hand.

"Just so," he responded; "just so. You have hit the nail on the head. I have simply to point the annihilator at my subject and push the button. Great invention, is it not?"

He turned the apparatus slowly around in his hands, while he fixed his gaze upon me with an expression of benevolent appreciation of my interest in the matter.

"In this instrument is stored the greatest power of the ages—
the power of levitation. You look surprised; but the truth is, I
have discovered a means of destroying gravitation—and behold,
I have levitation, the antithesis of gravity! Many men have
claimed this before and have duped the innocents by illusions and
stories of floating bodies, men and furniture suspended in mid-air.
But common sense should have told them that the destruction of
gravity would not have such a result as that.

"What is it that holds us on the earth? It is the force of gravity, is it not? Of course it is. In this latitude the earth revolves on its axis at the rate of nearly a thousand miles an hour. Now, when I destroy in you the force of gravitation, you, as a man of science, know as well as I what will happen. The centrifugal force of the earth's revolution will shoot you off into space at the rate of sixteen miles a minute; so fast that the eye cannot follow

you. You will be out of sight in a twinkling. Now, that's as plain as the nose on your face — don't you think it is?"

I assured him that it was all very plain.

"As to what becomes of you," he went on, "is neither here nor there. So far as this earth is concerned, you will be annihilated. You will leave it with the force of a cannon-ball and nothing this side of the moon can stop you. You may perhaps land on the moon or you may go on to the sun, or you may continue to shoot through space, forever and a day. But these are questions that concern neither you nor —"

There was a crash; the table was violently upset, and Hiram Jacob was gone. A hole in the roof of the porch marked his exit from earth. He had accidently pushed the button while the machine was pointed toward himself; and as he had it in his hand at the time, it of course went with him, as did also the chair on which he was sitting.

After gathering together my scattered senses, by which time Mr. Jacob and my chair were fifty miles on their way to the stars, I picked up the table and quietly destroyed the letters I had written, and after a little while I called on Helen to talk over the plans for our wedding.

